



PHD

The Religious Problem with Religious Freedom: Why International Theory Needs Political Theology

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The religious problem with religious freedom: why international theory needs political theology

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Politics, Languages, and International Studies

May 2013

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Robert Joustra

Abstract

The 2011 assassination of Pakistani Minister Shahbaz Bhatti prompted the promise of, and strong disagreement over, the Canadian Office of Religious Freedom, presenting a puzzle for Canadian foreign policy: Is it possible to explain the variation in how religious freedom is understood and applied? This variation can be explained in part by the religious problem with religious freedom, which is that underlying rival versions of religious freedom are rival meanings of the religious and the secular. Demonstrated in the Canadian case, two rival versions of religious freedom can be seen: *laïcité*, an antagonistic, privatized religious/secular divide, and Judeo-Christian secularism, a mutually supportive religious/secular divide. These rival meanings are often undisclosed because they are derivative of a shift in what Charles Taylor calls the modern social imaginary, a whole new way human beings imagine themselves, and the practices that sustain and provide meaning to that imagination. This has shifted boundaries between the religious and the secular, as the inverse of one another, and sustained specific social forms, what Taylor calls the objectified economy, the pre-political public, and an increasingly radical self-government. Unfortunately, mainstream international theory is more problem than solution, sustaining undisclosed, specifically modern social forms and their religious/secular assumptions. An alternative definition of a much contested concept, political theology, advanced through critical readings of Carl Schmitt, Vendulka Kubáľková, Daniel Philpott, Monica Toft, and Timothy Shah, holds better promise, defined as the understandings and practices that political actors have about the meaning of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes legitimate political authority. Political theology finally suggests a principled secular approach to religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy, one which radically redefines the secular not as the inverse of the religious, but as the proper response of the state to diversity.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Research Question and Central Argument

The 2011 assassination of Pakistani Minister of Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti came as a major shock to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and to his Ministers of Immigration and Citizenship, Jason Kenney, and of Foreign Affairs, John Baird. In February, 2011, Bhatti spent several days meeting with the Prime Minister, and others of his Ministers, discussing Pakistani politics and the often precarious situation of religious freedom in that country. Shahbaz Bhatti, a Catholic, was the first Pakistan minister for minority affairs and the only Christian serving in the Islamic state's cabinet when he died on March 2, 2011. A militant Islamist group¹ claimed responsibility for killing Bhatti, who had been urging reform of blasphemy laws. Minister Kenny later recalled,

The Prime Minister was deeply affected by this as was everyone who had the chance to meet him. His visit to Canada shortly before his assassination helped to galvanize within the government the reality of this kind of persecution. . . . Just before I brought Shahbaz to meet the Prime Minister, I told the Prime Minister it would be a miracle if the man he was about to meet would be alive in a few months' time.²

In a speech later in Washington, Minister Baird said that "The news of his passing was felt at the heart of our government."³ Prime Minister Harper, Minister Baird, Minister Kenney, and other MPs and government officials consistently connected the killing of Bhatti with the Canadian government's priority for establishing an Office of Religious Freedom (the Office) inside the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

In his speech appointing Dr. Andrew Bennett as the first Ambassador for Religious Freedom on February 19, 2013, the Prime Minister made the connection between Bhatti's murder and the new Office explicit.

¹ The use of the term Islamist here is consistent with Bassam Tibi's use in *Islam and Islamism* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2012). He differentiates between Islam, as a religious faith, and Islamism which "emanates from a political interpretation of Islam: it is based not on the religious faith of Islam but on an ideological use of religion within the political realm" (vii).

² Steven Chase, "Conservatives laying groundwork for Office of Religious Freedom" in *The Globe and Mail*, January 1 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/conservatives-laying-groundwork-for-office-of-religious-freedom/article1357558/>. Accessed February 25, 2013.

³ Address by Minister Baird at Religious Liberty Dinner. Washington D.C., May 24 2012. <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/speeches-discours/2012/05/24a.aspx?lang=eng&view=d>. Accessed February 25, 2013.

I am privileged, in the course of my service as Prime Minister, to encounter many extraordinary individuals and, from time to time, even among all of these extraordinary people, someone is exceptional. One such person I met in my office on Parliament Hill in 2011. He was the Minister of Minorities of Pakistan, Shahbaz Bhatti. He worked tirelessly to defend the vulnerable not only his fellow Christians, but also Hindus, Sikhs, Ahmadi Muslims, and all other minorities. He did so knowing that it placed him under a constant and imminent threat to his life. He was an honourable and humble man. Shahbaz and I discussed the threats faced by religious minorities, and the need for Canada to do more. Only three weeks later, while travelling to work in Islamabad, Shahbaz Bhatti was assassinated. Those of us who met him, and certainly his family and friends, will continue to mourn his loss. But his legacy, is, I believe, a legacy of hope, hope for those who are persecuted for their faith, hope for those who believe we can make a difference, hope that if there is goodness enough to inspire one man to speak out even in the most harrowing of circumstances, there is goodness enough to inspire all of us to do our part.

Unlike Shahbaz, most of the countless men and women who are persecuted for their faith are not known to us by name. But to them we say, Canada will not forget you. When you are silenced, we will speak out. We will use our freedom to plead for yours. And, we will not rest until the day you can exercise, fully and without fear, your birthright as members of the human family.⁴

Yet the reception in Canada was not so clearly positive. Arvind Sharma, a professor of religious studies at McGill and author of *Problematizing Religious Freedom*⁵, called the Office an attempt at “predatory Christian proselytization”⁶; noted international theorist Elizabeth Shakman Hurd in a lecture to the University of Ottawa warned against a “hegemony of religious freedom”⁷; and Doug Saunders, a well-known British-Canadian journalist, the international affairs columnist for Canada’s paper of record, *The Globe and Mail*, its European Bureau Chief, and best-selling author of *Arrival City* and *The Myth of the Muslim Tide*, said it was “time to speak out against religious freedom.”⁸ Canada has a comparatively peaceful and settled liberal democracy, yet its politics are divided not only on

⁴ “PM delivers remarks on the establishment of the Office of Religious Freedom” on the website of the Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper, February 19 2013. <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=5310>. Accessed February 25, 2013.

⁵ Arvind Sharma, *Problematizing Religious Freedom* (Springer: Springer, 2011), 12.

⁶ Arvind Sharma, “Religious Freedom, Compliments of the West” in *The Mark News*, December 6 2011. <http://www.themarknews.com/articles/7670-religious-freedom-compliments-of-the-west/#.UJp01MXoSUK>. Accessed February 25, 2013.

⁷ In *The Globe and Mail*, October 17 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/the-hegemony-of-religious-freedom/article4617004/>. At the University of Ottawa, October 2 2012. <http://cips.uottawa.ca/should-canada-promote-religious-freedom/>. In *Embassy*, October 10 2012. Accessed February 25, 2013. <http://www.embassynews.ca/opinion/2012/10/09/should-canada-promote-religious-freedom/42595>.

⁸ Doug Saunders, “Religious Freedom sends the wrong message to the wrong people”, in *The Globe and Mail*. October 6, 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/doug-saunders-religious-freedom-sends-the-wrong-message-to-the-wrong-people/article4591927/>. Accessed February 25, 2013.

the meaning, interpretation, and application of a fundamental human right,⁹ religious freedom, but also on whether such a right should even be part of Canadian foreign policy.

This leads to the research question: Is it possible to explain the variation in how religious freedom is understood and applied in Canadian foreign relations?

The central argument is that underlying the rival and often incompatible definitions of religious freedom are rival and incompatible definitions of the religious and the secular. The assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti in March, 2011, and the debate leading to the establishment of the Office of Religious Freedom in February, 2013, show that two rival versions of religious freedom persist in Canadian foreign policy: *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism. Underlying each is a different meaning of the religious and the secular, and especially the relative danger or importance of the religious for establishing a secular consensus.

Laïcité defines the religious and the secular as distinct, each defined as oppositional to the other. The religious is transcendent and private, while the secular is the mundane, public, and rational. In this definition, it was the suppression of the religious which produced a rational, neutral public square, and it is a democratic priority to safeguard that space from religious or other ideological imposition.

Judeo-Christian secularism also defines the religious and the secular as distinct, each defined as oppositional to the other. But while religion is transcendent and private, in this case, it is not a public danger. In fact, Judeo-Christian secularism defines the secular as produced from *within* religious discourse, resting the values of human rights, the dignity of persons, and democracy itself on the inheritance of Judeo-Christian beliefs and theology. While the religious may be disestablished, in the formal institutional sense, it is nonetheless a vital “civic oxygen.”¹⁰

⁹ To qualify what is meant by a fundamental human right, this dissertation takes those rights as listed in *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) to be fundamental, international human rights. Article 18 of that U.N. declaration guarantees religious freedom as a human right.

¹⁰ As phrased by Ray Pennings, “Religious faith is the civic oxygen of our social ecology” in *The Globe and Mail*. August 23, 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/religious-faith-is-the-civic-oxygen-of-our-social-ecology/article1371878/>. Accessed February 25, 2013.

Table 1.1: Studying Rival Versions of Religious Freedom using Political Theology: Laïcité and Judeo-Christian Secularism

	Political Theology: the understandings and practices that political actors have about the meaning of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes legitimate political authority			
Rival Versions of Religious Freedom	Understanding and practice of the religious	Understanding and practice of the secular	Relationship between religious and secular	What constitutes legitimate political authority?
Laïcité	Transcendent, but privatized and individualized concept of religion	Neutral, rational, public, in principle its logic and social forms are accessible to all people	Antagonistic, the secular must be safeguarded from the religious to preserve the political	Only secular politics are legitimate, limited democratic progress can be made in religious states, reproducing religion-free politics produces better changes of a rational peace
Judeo-Christian Secularism	Transcendent, but privatized and individualized concept of religion	Neutral, rational, public, in principle its logic and social forms are accessible to all people	Mutually constitutive, while the two are separate, the secular owes its origins to JC tradition. Exclusivist claims only Judeo-Christian can produce secularity. Inclusivist that in Canada, so far, it has been Judeo-Christian tradition, but other traditions may also be able.	Limited democratic progress can be made apart from Judeo-Christian values at the basis of a political culture; best chance at peace is to replicate those values in a polity (whether via JC or others)

These meanings of the secular and the religious, underlying rival versions of religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy, are often undisclosed because they operate as part of what Charles Taylor calls *A Secular Age*,¹¹ the modern social imaginary. Taylor means by the modern social imaginary the way that human beings imagine themselves, and the practices that sustain and provide meaning to that imagination. These rival meanings, laïcité and Judeo-Christian secularism, are in fact part a bigger Secular transformation in the modern social imaginary. Taylor’s approach reflects an emerging literature in international relations theory,¹² which argues that the religious and the secular are constructed terms whose meaning, relationship, and boundaries reflect historical configurations of power, not transhistorical or transcultural phenomenon.¹³

¹¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 2007. A note on terminology: Taylor uses Secular to denote not simply a kind of secularity, but a “whole way of life.” Refer to ‘Clarifying Definitions’ in this introduction for more detail on definitions.

¹² Hereafter “international theory,” as the term was used by Martin Wight in “Why is there no International Theory” in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), 17-34. One could put international relations theory also in its place, as used.

¹³ See for example Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). Daniel Philpott, “The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in

This shift is fundamental even to mainstream international theory, meaning a new theoretical approach will be needed that clarifies the religious and the secular in rival versions of religious freedom. That approach is political theology.

Daniel Philpott, Monica Toft, and Timothy Shah describe political theology in *God's Century* as “the set of ideas that a religious actor holds about what is legitimate political authority.”¹⁴ This is a major new approach in international relations, but it needs to be augmented to account also for the fundamental constitution of the religious and the secular that shape who qualifies as a “religious actor” and the meaning of “political authority.” This thesis argues that political theology is “the understandings and practices that political actors have about the meaning of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes legitimate political authority.” This definition not only analyzes the increasingly important religious motivations in international relations, but it also contextualizes those motivations within rival constructions of the religious and the secular.

This sustains an argument for a new definition of religious freedom in Canadian foreign relations, principled secularism, which reflects Canadian values but deliberately engages nonmodern rationale, including the religious, abroad for the pursuit of those same principles.

1.2 Clarifying Definitions and Style

This dissertation depends on careful definitions. These definitions are themselves subject to complication as part of the argument. Indeed, the oppositional meaning of the religious and the secular already prefigures in an important way the meaning of those terms. However, when used without modifier or otherwise qualified, this thesis uses their mainstream meanings as follows:

Religion – or – the religious: as defined commonly in the West, “all religions by definition seek understanding of, and harmony with, the widest reaches of transcendent reality – the quality that distinguishes them from political ideologies such as Marxism or secular nationalism that are sometimes thought to be functionally equivalent to religion. Religions

International Relations,” *World Politics* 55 (October 2002), 66-95. – “Has the Study of Global Politics Found Religion?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009), 183-202. – “The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations,” *World Politics* 52 (2000), 206-245. Scott Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

¹⁴ Daniel Philpott, Monica Toft, Timothy Shah, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 21-22.

offer answers to universal questions about the origins of existence, the afterlife, and realities that transcend humanity; nations generally do not.”¹⁵

secular (small “s”): without modifier, such as laïcité, or Judeo-Christian, or principled, and so forth, the secular is used in its modern form to denote the non-religious or religiously neutral. For example, a secular government, a secular institution, a secular argument, all serve to modify those to mean religiously neutral.

Secular (capital “S”): as used by Charles Taylor in *A Secular Age*, the Secular is more than simple religious neutrality. It means a “whole way of life,” often used synonymously by him with “the modern moral order” and “the modern social imaginary.”

Certain phrases or terms, including some direct quotes, are bolded in the thesis. These include headers and sub-headers, as well as important definitions or sign posts for the reader, often additionally rendered in tables or charts for ease of reference. Where direct quotes are bolded, this emphasis is also added.

1.3 Research Aims

This thesis has several aims.

First, it aims to clarify the popular and policy conversations around religious freedom in Canada, and by extension it is suggested other similar western states.¹⁶ Religious freedom is an area of new if substantial research interest, but it remains true that very little work has been done on theories of religious freedom, its meaning, definition, and concomitant policy options in foreign affairs. This argument aims to clarify in an original way the meanings of religious freedom in foreign policy.

Second, by showing the Secular connection between the problem of religion in international theory¹⁷ and the problem of rival versions of religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy,

¹⁵ This is the definition advanced by Daniel Philpott, Monica Toft, and Timothy Shah in *God’s Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 21.

¹⁶ It will be argued in the next chapter that the Canadian case is a reasonable comparative to other culturally commensurate constitutional democracies, especially Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and even the United States. This comparative is more suggestive than it is demonstrated, however.

¹⁷ For more detail on the “problem of religion” in international relations see Daniel Philpott, “Has the Student of Global Politics Found Religion?” *The Annual Review of Political Science*, 2009. 12:183-202 and Philpott, “Explaining the Political Ambivalence of Religion” *American Political Science Review*, 2007. Vol. 1, No 3., 505-525.

this thesis shows not only *that* the meaning and power of the religious matters, but also *how*. Using Taylor's modern social imaginary as the connection also brings in a new approach to international relations, which has not been widely used to this point.¹⁸

Third, the argument answers Daniel Philpott's call in international theory for more "deep theory"¹⁹ on the nature of the religious and the secular. The use of the term political theology for this kind of deep theory may surprise scholars of international relations, but in fact the term has now been brought into the discipline by several well-known scholars, including Philpott himself.²⁰ Nevertheless, what is called political theology here is not only the ideas religious actors have about political authority, but also the framework within which ideas like religious and secular are given often contested meanings. The difference between religious and Secular approaches to politics and society is something Charles Taylor brings of relevance to debates on religion in international theory, and adds an important, absent, element to the definition of Philpott, Toft, and Shah. This is an original contribution that a reading of Taylor can also bring to debates over modernity, westernization, and democratic theory.

Fourth, this thesis argues for one specific definition of religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy: principled secularism. The Canadian case shows not only evidence of rival versions of religious freedom, but it also tests the value-addition to a political-theological approach. The deliberate disclosure of the secular and the religious in a social imaginary, which political theology demands, invalidates both *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism. It shows a preference for principled secularism: the radical redefinition of the secular, predicated on certain strong public principles, not as the mutual opposition of the religious. Principled secularism is specific on what principles qualify as secular, but agnostic as the logic or rationale by which persons and political communities arrive at those principles. This approach to religious freedom is best suited for deeply pluralist societies, including Canada itself, which is unable, or unwilling, to articulate what rationale are or not acceptable in public life. New, sustainable foreign policy choices, including the high priority of the

¹⁸ Elizabeth Shakman Hurd makes reference to Charles Taylor in *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). See also John Dyck, Paul Rowe, and Jens Zimmermann (Eds), *Politics and the Religious Imagination* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁹ Daniel Philpott, "Has the Study of Global Politics Found Religion?" Philpott writes a list of further study needed for political science to "find more religion" including his fifth, a call for "more deep theorizing about religion's political influence. . . . Just as security scholars must understand military strategy, political economists economics, and feminist scholars social and gender theory, so, too, political scientists who study religion ought to study theology and religious studies more than most do presently," 198-199.

²⁰ See most recently Philpott, Toft, Shah, *God's Century*.

protection of minority religious voices in majority religious cultures, are some of the practical contributions that are made.

1.4 Research Design and Methodology

The design of the research and methodology is social constructivist, after the work of theorists such as Friedrich Kratochwil and Ted Hopf, who have been described as belonging to the camp of “interpretive/interpretative constructivism.”²¹ Kratochwil and John Ruggie have also been described as “holistic constructivists” who integrate the domestically constituted corporate identities of states and their internationally driven social identities into “a unified analytical perspective that treats the domestic and the international as two faces of a single social and political order.”²² Kratochwil describes this constructivist perspective²³ as dependent on two basic commitments.

First, “agency matters in social life and, therefore, agents are not simple throughputs of structures – material or ideal – working behind their backs.”²⁴ In describing or classifying social concepts, therefore, there is an emphasis on contextual knowledge, not only as it relates to systems and institutions, but also as it relates to an actor’s variable self and social understandings.

²¹ Jeffrey T. Checkel, “Constructivism and Foreign Policy,” in Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne (Eds), *Foreign Policy: Theories. Actors. Cases* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 73. Jodok Troy argues that a theory of a “soft realism” characterizes the work of Scott Thomas, Jeffrey Haynes, and Daniel Philpott. He says soft realists “acknowledge the inter-subjectivity of religion and try to analyze religion from the perspective of its potential for peace, as well as its potential for conflict. Furthermore, they tend to favour Constructivist approaches.” Jodok Troy, *Christian Approaches to International Affairs* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 39-40.

²² Christian Reus-Smit, “Constructivism,” in *Theories of International Relations*, 3rd ed. Scot Burchill and others (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 201. Reus-Smit here distinguishes between “systemic” (ex, Alexander Wendt), “unite-level” (ex, Peter Katzenstein), and “holistic” constructivists.

²³ Kratochwil is careful in his argument to say that constructivism is neither a theory nor an approach, any more than empiricism is. He says, “Rather, in both cases a meta-theoretical issue is raised: whether things are simply given and correctly perceived by our senses (empiricism), or whether the things we perceive are rather the product of our conceptualizations (constructivism).” Friedrich Kratochwil, “Constructivism: what it is (not) and how it matters” in Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 81.

²⁴ Friedrich Kratochwil, “Constructivism: what it is (not) and how it matters” in Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 86.

The second basic belief of constructivists is that “if we accept that the human world is one of artifice, then the notions of the actors have about their actions matter. They cannot be left exogenous to the descriptions and explanations of actions, nor can they be solved by assumption, precisely because the latter often amounts to a naturalizing move contradicting the first commitment.”²⁵ He argues that this “should also help us to end the entirely fruitless debate of whether interest or ideas are primary. After all, interests are neither universal nor self-explanatory.”²⁶

The research question, “Is it possible to explain the variation in how religious freedom is understood and applied in Canadian foreign relations?” is clearly best explored by this approach, dependent on understanding the influence of contextual knowledge (of the religious and the secular) on approaches to religious freedom in foreign policy. Part of the explanatory strength of the constructivist perspective, argues Kratochwil, is that it does not suggest a pure scientific causation, as other more positivistic approaches do. He argues, like John Mackie,²⁷ that we usually face situations that are of the INUS type: “The identified cause or causes is an insufficient but non-redundant element of a complex which is itself unnecessary but sufficient for the production of a result.”²⁸ Rival versions of the religious and the secular may not *necessarily* simply produce rival versions of religious freedom, indeed depending on the constitutive meaning of these terms they may be a factor in violence, not complex social and political debate. Nor are rival version of the religious and the secular the only conceivable cause of diverging applications in foreign policy, as there is significant evidence that human rights, including religious freedom, may be advanced selectively in varying contexts depending on state interests or power.²⁹ The explanation that rival versions of the religious and the secular underlie rival versions of religious freedom is not therefore an exhaustive causal argument, but the constructivist approach neither expects nor demands this. Kratochwil argues that admitting a plurality of possible interpretations “allows us to free ourselves from the mistaken identification of explanation with one of its forms. It allows us to

²⁵ Kratochwil, “Constructivism”, 86.

²⁶ Ibid, 86.

²⁷ John L. Mackie, “Causes and Conditions”, in Myles Brandt (Ed), *The Nature of Causation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976).

²⁸ Kratochwil, “Constructivism”, 96.

²⁹ An example of this in the Canadian context would be the Prime Minister’s harsh criticisms of human rights – including religious freedom – abuse in China early in his majority term, which has softened significantly. The correlation between this softening criticism and the work to conclude a major Canada-China trade deal certainly play a causal role in the changing in applying human rights, even if those rights understanding has not shifted.

ask interesting questions instead of eliminating them from the research programme because of a problematic understanding of science.”³⁰

Methodologically, this interpretive constructivist approach is what Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating simply call interpretivist.³¹ This approach sustains that the objective and the subjective are intrinsically linked, that is reality is knowable, but not apart from human subjectivity. The aim is therefore to understand subjective knowledge, as in the case understanding rival versions of religious freedom in Canadian foreign relations, or contextual knowledge, rather than positivistic natural law. Porta and Keating contrast this to, for example, positivist, post-positivist, and humanistic methodological approaches. In the case of the meaning of the religious and the secular, it is neither true that these terms can be positivistically and universally defined, as this thesis argues explicitly against, nor is it true that these terms have no meaning. These terms have definite meanings, and very important ones, but their multiple meanings also rival one another in an often confusing and contradictory way. Methodologically, what is needed is an approach that would help sort these meanings from one another to clarify the political choices being made in understanding and applying religious freedom.

The interpretivist methodology, according to Porta and Keating, is a relative focus on meanings and context. The focus first is on the contextual meanings of religious freedom within the debate on the assassination of Bhatti and the Office from March, 2011, to February, 2013. These sources include mainstream print and web media in Canada, journals, and speeches during that time. A second focus is on the historical construction of the religious and the secular, to which this thesis turns to Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*, as a deconstructive account of the modern shift in the religious and the secular, and the political and social forms – what he calls the modern social imaginary – that this makes possible. The third focus is on mainstream international theory itself, used in comparative analysis with Taylor’s concept of the modern social imaginary, to demonstrate the “politics of secularism” in international relations, and the need for a new approach in the form of political theology. Choices in how to narrow and define these discourses form the balance of this methodological section.

³⁰ Ibid, 97.

³¹ While the perspective is named interpretive constructivism, the methodology itself is known as interpretivism, and this is the term the dissertation uses when addressing methodological questions hereafter.

1.4.1 The Choice of Canada, Shahbaz Bhatti, and the Office of Religious Freedom

Interpretivists “select cases on the basis of their inherent interest (for example, paradigmatic cases), not because they are typical of a category but for what they tell us about complex social processes.”³² Further, an interpretivist will tend to “immerse him/herself in the situation to be studied, to empathize with the population and to see things from their perspective.”³³ The choice of Canada as the focus country for its foreign relations in religious freedom is therefore first a complex social process, and second an immersive opportunity.

The Canadian debate on religious freedom in foreign affairs is relatively new, defined in this dissertation from the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti in March, 2011, to the launch of the Office of Religious Freedom in February, 2013.³⁴ The launch of this Office was certainly a complex social process. The significant gap in this appointment points to the difficulty the government had filling this contentious post,³⁵ but also provided the opportunity for a certain amount of debate on its merits, focus, and meaning prior to launch. The sources covered during this period include mainstream, print, and web media, journal articles, speeches, and events.³⁶ This includes non-redundant³⁷ opinion and editorial pieces from:

- The Globe and Mail, paper of record
- The National Post, other national paper, also national paper for all Post-Media partners, including Vancouver Sun, Edmonton Journal, Calgary Herald, Regina

³² Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating (Eds), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 29.

³³ Ibid, 31.

³⁴ Although more study could be done in the period after February, 2013, including on the reception of the Office, for practicality this dissertation chooses to cut off the study in question at the launch of the Office itself, and focus on the debate between announcement of intention and establishment of the Office.

³⁵ Louise Elliott reports for the CBC that, “a senior government official told CBC News that Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird has had a hard time finding someone to fill the role of ambassador to head up the office. Two people who were approached ultimately turned the post down for logistical and personal reasons.” Elliott, “Religious Freedom office nearly ready for debut: critics applaud consultations but are wary of initiative’s potential pitfalls.” *CBC News*, September 8, 2012. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2012/09/07/pol-office-religious-freedom-ambassador.html>. Accessed February 26, 2013. See also Natalie Bender, “A headhunter’s nightmare at Canada’s Office of Religious Freedom,” *Toronto Star*, February 18, 2013. http://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorialopinion/2013/02/18/a_headhunters_nightmare_at_canadas_office_of_religious_freedom.html. Accessed March 2, 2013. She writes: “Clearly the government couldn’t go on in this embarrassing way forever. It was inevitable that someone would eventually be chosen to become the office’s inaugural ambassador. But whether that person will be capable of filling the role up to a standard that Canadians will find acceptable and worthy of support is very doubtful indeed.”

³⁶ See References for a complete list of sources.

³⁷ News articles in mainstream papers regularly run parallel stories, with sources from the Canadian Press. Articles that simply report events without serious opinion, or pieces that are redundant across multiple platforms are eliminated.

Leader-Post, Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, Windsor Star, Ottawa Citizen, and The Montreal Gazette

- The Toronto Star, largest circulation paper
- CBC (Canadian Broadcast Corporation) News
- Embassy, foreign policy newsweekly
- Hill Times, politics and Hill newsweekly
- Macleans, national newsweekly
- The Canadian International Council, OpenCanada.org, Canada's Council on Foreign Relations

Speeches and events covered include government or government-sponsored events and speeches, such as three Parliamentary Forums on Religious Freedom, sponsored by MP David Anderson, or speeches and consultations on religious freedom from the Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, or other Cabinet members. Interestingly, of Canada's approximately thirty-three national think tanks in the period between March, 2011, and February, 2013, only one paid any sustained attention to the Office and its politics.³⁸ Several advocacy groups, including the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the Baha'i, B'nai Brith, the Catholic Church, the Muslim Canadian Congress, and others, did participate more actively, though their submissions were generally not public and therefore do not form part of the sources for this thesis.

Second, as a Canadian working at a Canadian think tank on issues of religious freedom, I had the opportunity attend and participate in many of these debates and conversations. I therefore had firsthand access to, and even some role in shaping, the discourse on religious freedom in foreign affairs in media, in political conversations, and speaking at and attending events on the Office. The appointed ambassador for religious freedom at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Dr. Andrew Bennett, is an acquaintance, as were several of the candidates approached prior to Dr. Bennett. The pool of candidates which fit the government's priorities for this position was modest.

³⁸ Included here: Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, Broadbent Institute, C.D. Howe Institute, Caledon Institute of Social Policy, Canada West Foundation, Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives, Canadian Centre for Policy Studies, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Constitution Foundation, Canadian Council of Chief Executives, Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, Cardus, Citizens for Public Justice, Conference Board of Canada, Fraser Institute, Frontier Centre for Public Policy, Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, Institute on Governance, Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity, Institute for Research and Public Policy, International Development Research Centre, The Laurier Institution, Macdonald Laurier Institute, Montreal Economic Institute, Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation, North-South Institute, Pembina Institute, Public Policy Forum, Rideau Institute, Samara, Vanier Institute of Family, Wellesley Institute.

The choice of Canada is also partly justified when testing rival versions of religious freedom because of its unique position between the poles of the United States and Europe. Both the United States and Europe have encountered serious multicultural challenges, with evidence ranging from the German Chancellor's famous "failed multiculturalism" statement, to British Prime Minister David Cameron's call to build a more "muscular liberalism," and former French President Nicholas Sarkozy's account of "positive laïcité." In the United States, polarization in the latest Presidential elections (2012) has produced several crises, not least of which was that of religious freedom within America's reforming health care system.³⁹ Canada, by fact of history, was founded by both the English and French traditions of law and secularity, while in recent years being influenced strongly by America. Its middle-position, often referred to in Canadian foreign policy literature as "middle power,"⁴⁰ puts it in a unique place to both explore the meaning of religious freedom, and to offer suggestive accounts of the present and future of secularity and the religious in commensurable contexts. It is possible, finally, to review the debates over Canadian foreign policy and religious freedom in which, for example, a much more exhaustive research agenda would be needed in the United States.

There are, of course, debates in Canada over religious freedom which are domestic, not foreign. In fact, by far this is a more active debate since it has the benefit of domestic legal and constitutional precedence in a way in which foreign policy does not. But the focus of this thesis is not on the comparatively well-developed case law surrounding domestic religious freedom issues in Canada, though some parallels will occasionally be drawn for interest and international relevance. A brief and introductory overview of Canadian culture and context for religious freedom is provided. But the focus is on the debate about the Office, between the assassination of Bhatti, as it relates to the Office, in March, 2011, and the Office's establishment in February, 2013.

³⁹ This is known as the "HHS Mandate" or the "contraceptive mandate" which is a state or federal regulation or law that requires health insurers, or employers that provide their employees with health insurance, to include contraception in their health insurance plans. A federal mandate was implemented by President Obama in 2012 and was argued by some to be a violation of religious freedom, serving as a recurring issue in the 2012 Presidential election.

⁴⁰ See for example John Holmes, "Most Safely in the Middle" and Mark Neufeld, "Hegemony and Foreign Policy Analysis: The Case of Canada as a Middle Power" in Duane Bratt and Christopher Kukucha (Eds), *Readings in Canadian Foreign Policy: Classic Debates and New Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

1.4.2 The Choice of Taylor's *A Secular Age*

The choice to use Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* in this discussion is reflective of the methodology. Taylor gives both a widely recognized, holistic account of complex social processes (secularity), and does this from *within*, that is in an immersive way, his account of the Secular. In the practical sense, an argument that engages with questions of freedom of religion in Canada cannot avoid engaging Taylor, Canada's foremost public intellectual, and perhaps best-regarded academic voice. Taylor has been active in all levels of Canadian politics, is the author of influential reports on multiculturalism and religious freedom for the government, and has published widely on secularity and the religious.

However, Taylor's holistic account is also able to draw together the parallels in *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism in a way other theoretical accounts in international theory fail to do. It is Taylor's argument that the mutual constitution of the religious and the secular, the constructed settlement that justifies the social forms of the modern social imaginary, is fundamental to modern life. His account of the Secular provides an approach that contextualizes rival accounts of the religious and the secular in Canadian religious freedom policy abroad. Taylor makes it possible methodologically to not simply state, as Elizabeth Shakman Hurd and some others do, that international relations is secular, but to show more exactly what that means. There are other approaches that might be used – such as the virtue-ethics approach of Alasdair MacIntyre, or Talal Asad's *Formations of the Secular* – but Taylor's specific philosophical accounts, within the context of Canada, made him the strongest choice. Taylor's own work is therefore a significant part of the discourse under analysis, and it is used in a comparative fashion to gain insight into both international theory and Canadian religious freedom policy.

1.4.3 The Scope of International Theory

Although Taylor provides the means by which to be more specific about what exactly is meant by the politics of secularism in international relations, international theory itself is a field of inquiry that would be impractical to survey exhaustively given the limitations of this thesis. This is narrowed in two ways.

First, priority is given to the discipline's self-narrations. Consistent with the interpretivist method, the concern of this argument is about contextual understandings, how international theory understands itself. This is done primarily through readings of introductory texts on theory for international relations students: John Baylis and Steve Smith's *The Globalization of World Politics*, and Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal's *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*. These texts are not exhaustive, but they are justifiably representative of the way in which mainstream paradigms of international theory are taught and understood inside the discipline.

Second, within these texts themselves, specific authors are used in their approaches to the major traditions of Realism, Marxism, Neo-Liberalism, Constructivism, and Postmodern or Poststructuralism. Certain schools are omitted, such as New Liberalism, the English School, Critical Theory, Feminisms, and so forth, and this is mainly because these approaches are not sufficiently mainstream, as selected by the introductory texts. International theorists covered include William Wohlforth, Jack Donnelly, Arthur Stein, Andrew Moravcsik, Nicholas Rengger, Benno Teschke, Ian Hurd, Richard Price, and David Campbell.

A comparative analysis is then done of Charles Taylor's modern social imaginary and these international theorists to show that the Secular is indeed a fundamental part of the structure of these thinkers, justifying a new approach of political theology.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis begins with the puzzle laid out in the case of Canada and the Office of Religious Freedom: Is it possible to explain the variation in how religious freedom is understood and applied in Canadian foreign relations?

Chapter two uses the sources of debate from March, 2011, to February, 2013, in the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti and the launch of the Office to present evidence for two rival versions of religious freedom. These are *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism. *Laïcité* imagines the religious as necessarily private, unsuited for and possibly dangerous to rational political life. Its definition of the secular is predicated on the removal of religion as a

practical force in social and political life, out of which the conditions for democracy are made possible. Judeo-Christian secularism is its opposite: not religion as liability to democracy, but a specific religious tradition as intrinsic to the fundamental virtues and values, human dignity, tolerance, neutrality, and so forth, that make democratic politics possible. Far from dangerous, the Judeo-Christian tradition is in fact essential for democratic flourishing.

Both *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism argue for the existence of the religious and the secular as independent, as oppositionally defined. They disagree on whether the religious can or cannot be a productive democratic force. Judeo-Christian secularism imagines secularism as emerging from the Judeo-Christian religious traditions, *laïcité* as emerging despite and against the religious.

Such is the “religious problem with religious freedom,” that such rival accounts of the religious and the secular underlie Canadian accounts of religious freedom, evidenced here in the period between 2011 and 2013 in debates over the Office. Further, these accounts carry implicit foreign policy prescriptions for the “solution” to the religious problem that border on the entirely impractical. This argument is summarized in Table 1.1 of this introduction, reproduced in the chapter.

Chapter three argues that these underlying versions of the religious and the secular – *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism – are historical inventions and part of what Taylor calls the Secular or the modern social imaginary. The chapter serves as an introduction to Taylor’s approach, the conditions which he argues led to the rise of “religion” and “secularity” as independent, oppositional constructs, and the content of that transformation in a Secular age. This transformative content is what Taylor calls the modern social imaginary.

By a social imaginary, Taylor means more than theory or an intellectual framework. He means the whole way human beings imagine themselves, and the practices that sustain and provide meaning to that imagination. Secularity (capital S) for Taylor is more than simply about the demarcations of the religious and the secular, it is about a whole horizontal flattening of social reality, which removes not only higher gods, but also higher times, or hierarchies of any kind. It is about the radical innovation of secularity in the first place.

He qualifies the modern social imaginary by describing three dominant social forms: the economy, and objectified reality; the public sphere; and the self-governing people.

By the objectified economy Taylor means a fundamental objectification or economization of reality; a way of understanding the world as separate from ourselves as exploitable and consumable, and a providential ordering that puts reality implicitly at the service of human beings. It is a kind of anthropocentric shift, one which puts human persons at the centre of the drama of history, and further puts reality itself – as exogenous to humans – at their disposal. Human persons are disembedded from reality, and become self-interested persons whose self-interest produces a spontaneous political and economic order. Society itself is reimagined as an interlocking set of individual activities, rather than as hierarchically or organically authorized. Production, exchange, and consumption produce their own logic, their own system, with commensurate laws and dynamics.

The public sphere is also unique to the modern social imaginary, a powerful public that has a consciousness that exists outside the political boundaries of the state (or polity). The public itself is the authorizing power that brings the state into being, and though it is not *itself* political power, the public is a check to political power. As such, it is also the benchmark for legitimacy. The public, and the institutions it calls into existence, serves and should serve, no power but itself. The public's immanent power is absolute, not merely over gods or God, but over higher times, or hierarchies of any kind.

Finally, the “self-governing people” relocates sovereignty to the pre-political public. Taylor is conscious of, and indeed details, the tensions that manifest when a sovereign pre-political public encounters social and political problems. Since the objectified economy is exogenous and impersonal, there must always be agency to assign, something that Taylor says leads to “scapegoating.” But this is only one more example of the horizontal nature of secular reality; gone is the hierarchical order of personalized links, a vertical world of mediated access, and arrived is an impersonal egalitarian one, a direct-access society. The tensions that emerge are what Taylor's calls the “malaise of modernity.” These tensions are also covered as intrinsic to Taylor's approach, and key to understanding the modern social imaginary.

The **fourth chapter** does a comparative analysis of the social forms of the modern social imaginary in mainstream international theory. An exhaustive treatment of international theory is impractical, but using the discipline's self-narrations, theory texts, and introductory textbooks, in this case especially John Baylis and Steve Smith's *The Globalization of World Politics*, and Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal's *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, the methodology is narrowed to include representative figures from

the major traditions. These schools include Realism, Marxism, Neo-Liberal Institutionalism, Constructivism, and Poststructuralism, represented by William Wohlforth, Jack Donnelly, Arthur Stein, Andrew Moravcsik, Nicholas Rengger, Benno Teschke, Ian Hurd, Richard Price, and David Campbell. The aim is to show that Taylor's marks of the modern social imaginary are intensive enough to show up even across the diversity of theoretical approaches. This will sustain the argument that international theory is Secular, part of the religious problem with religious freedom, not the solution. It is possible that certain approaches within early Realism, or the English School, would resonate with these criticisms, but this does not invalidate the argument. The argument is that the rival meanings of the religious and the secular have not simply been overlooked, but are obscured, by many of the dominant approaches within international theory. The religious problem with religious freedom cannot be theoretically deconstructed because the dominant theoretical traditions are Secular.

What is needed, then, is an approach which deliberately and descriptively deconstructs the religious and the secular, and the social forms which underlie the modern social imaginary. This is the approach that can be called political theology. It is the subject of **fifth chapter**.

Since Carl Schmitt, political theology has been a controversial and polarizing term in political and international theory. Yet recently, noted international theorists, including Daniel Philpott, Monica Toft, Timothy Shah, Vendulka Kubáľková, and others have used the term as an approach to religion in international relations. The structure of this chapter first introduces the concept of political theology as it has come into international relations. Political theology has become a large, interdisciplinary field, so for that reason the focus is on thinkers who have deliberately intersected with or been enlisted in international relations. Perhaps more importantly, each thinker provides an important piece of the puzzle of how political theology will be defined. First, Carl Schmidt, whose famous claim that “all signification concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts” is the benchmark for how the discipline has used and defined the term. Second, Vendulka Kubáľková and her constructivist model of international political theology in international relations, offers rules based approach to secularization and the religious. Third, Daniel Philpott, Monica Toft, and Timothy Shah make a recent argument for political theology in *God's Century*, as the ideas a religious actor holds about what constitutes legitimate political authority. The definition advanced takes into account the historical Schmidt, the constructivist Kubáľková, and those of *God's Century*, as: the understandings and practices that political actors have about the

meaning of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes legitimate political authority. This definition not only analyzes the increasingly important religious motivations of actors in international relations, but it also contextualizes those motivations within rival constructions of the religious and the secular.

The **sixth and final chapter** makes the argument for a new definition of religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy: principled secularism. Principled secularism is predicated on Canadian values,⁴¹ which sustains a specific meaning of the secular, while defaulting on the definition of the religious. Principled secularism is a political-theological approach because it discloses both the meaning of the religious and the secular, and it does so while advancing the specific moral principles of the equality of regard and freedom of conscience, and two operative modes, separation of church and state and the neutrality of the state toward religions. Despite this, principled secularism is agnostic as to the rationale or the means by which persons arrive at these values and modes. These are European sentiments which are intrinsic to Canadian political culture, and therefore justified values on which to base official foreign relations. It is principled because it has specific content from Canadian culture and society, but it is secular because it does not monopolize the logic, religious or otherwise, by which people and societies may come to it. This places real limits on a cosmopolitan foreign policy, defining more sharply what qualifies as “secular,” but it also invites a more sustained engagement with a variety of rationale, including religious ones, as a foundation for these principles. It is not unreasonable for Canadian foreign policy, and religious freedom in those policies, to advance Canadian values and understandings. Finally, this chapter offers foreign policy applications for the Office of Religious Freedom. Principled secularism, 1) places real limits on the secular state in foreign policy, and its power to prescribe the logic behind the principles it advances; 2) this in turn underscores the priority of religious freedom generally for communities with rival definitions of the religious and the secular to freely and creatively align with Canadian principles; 3) a rejection of both *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, and the promise of engagement with non-state, especially religious actors in extending principled secularism; 4) a special priority therefore targeting apostasy and blasphemy laws,

⁴¹ “Canadian values” is a term that has become much more widely used in the last decade. In a background document to the Office of Religious Freedom, the government said: “The Office will be an important vehicle through which Canada can advance fundamental Canadian values including freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law worldwide.” Mark Kennedy, “Stephen Harper names Ottawa academic Andrew Bennett to head Office of Religious Freedom” in *Ottawa Citizen*, February 20, 2013. <http://www.ottawacitizen.com/mobile/news/top-stories/Stephen+Harper+names+Ottawa+academic+Andrew+Bennett+head/7985888/story.html>. Accessed February 26, 2013.

and efforts to outlaw the “defamation of religion,” both contrary to principled secularism and an obstruction to the extension of those principles in dominantly religious and nonmodern societies.

Chapter Two – Two Rival Versions of Religious Freedom

2.1 Argument and Structure of the Chapter

This chapter shows two rival versions of religious freedom, *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, present in debates over the Office of Religious Freedom, from March 2011 to February 2013, the death of Shahbaz Bhatti, and the launch of the Office. The argument then connects those rival versions to underlying definitions of religion and secularity. When qualifying religious freedom in a developed democracy like Canada several caveats are needed to focus the analysis.

First, although the literature on religious freedom has expanded in recent years, much of that commentary and debate has been domestic, and of that, much has been American. For example, the controversial Department of Health and Human Services Mandate (HHS Mandate) brought issues of religious freedom into sharp focus in the American Presidential elections of 2012. But while domestic religious freedom debates in America may score parallel observations to those in this chapter, these debates and their literature are not discussed. Neither is the focus on the comparatively well-developed case law surrounding domestic religious freedom issues within Canada itself, though some parallels will occasionally be drawn for interest and international relevance. A brief and introductory overview of Canadian legal and political context for religious freedom is provided.

Second, the chapter describes two definitions of the religious and the secular which have been advanced theoretically by international theorist Elizabeth Shakman Hurd in *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*.¹ Hurd not only describes the rival versions of the religious and the secular which this argument claims underlie rival versions of religious freedom in Canadian foreign relations, but she has also intervened in the debate in Canada itself, as recently as October, 2012. She is, then, herself part of the religious freedom debate under analysis, her lecture at the University of Ottawa, articles in Canada's foreign policy newsweekly *Embassy* and in its paper of record, *The Globe and Mail*. Some comparison is given to other international theorists, like Daniel Philpott's own nine definitions of the religious and the secular, to situate Hurd's analysis in the discipline.

¹ Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

Third, focus is given to the debate around the Office of Religious Freedom, in the time period between the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti in March 2011 and its launch in February 2013. This debate encompasses journal and newspaper articles, consultations, forums, and speeches, triggered – in the government’s own language – by the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti in March of 2011.² In these documents, evidence is found that two rival versions of the religious and the secular, *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, are indeed intrinsic to the rivalries of religious freedom.

2.2 Religious Freedom in Canada: A Legal and Political Context

Canada is not new to religious controversy, or to the perceived threat of instability due to religious freedoms colliding. The Manitoba School Crisis in the 1890s threatened more than one prime minister, revoking the provincial funding of Roman Catholic and Protestant schools, despite their constitutional protection.³ The *Public Schools Act* removed funding and established a system of tax-supported, non-sectarian public schools. The crisis spread federally, becoming a key issue in the 1896 election, resulting in the defeat of the Conservative government.⁴ Since the issue of religion was tied also to language, English/Protestant, and French/Catholic, the crisis also resulted in French no longer supported as an official language in Manitoba, and served to strengthen French Canadian nationalism in Quebec.

² In answering “Why was the office created?” the CBC reports that “The Conservatives say it was the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti in Pakistan in March 2011 that galvanized the government into taking more concrete action.” In “4 questions about Canada’s new Office of Religious Freedom” *CBC News*, February 20, 2013. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2013/02/19/f-religious-freedom-office.html>. Accessed February 27, 2013.

³ The constitutional mandate of a separate school jurisdiction and of a separate school is to provide education that the separate school board considers reflective of Roman Catholic (or, rarely, Protestant) theology, doctrine, and practices. This mandate is limited by the application of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and judicial decisions. The Constitution does not make separate school education a natural or unconditional right, only Protestants and Roman Catholics, whichever is the minority faith in a community, are considered for the establishment of a separate school system. This constitutional allowance, and the provincial power over education, was demanded as part of Confederation. Section 93 of the *Constitution Act, 1867* allows the federal government to intervene only to protect minority schools already established.

⁴ Manitoba has recently proposed new legislation governing other, non-state schools, which demands faith-based independent schools allow “gay-straight alliances.” The proposed legislation, Bill 18 – Manitoba’s Public Schools Amendment Act – is justified on the grounds of complying with provincial standards of equity, given that religious private schools may receive as much as 50% funding from taxpayers. See Sarah Boesveld, “Manitoba poised to demand faith-based independent schools allow gay-straight alliances” in *The National Post*, February 25, 2013. <http://news.nationalpost.com/2013/02/25/manitoba-poised-demand-faith-based-independent-schools-to-allow-gay-straight-alliances/>. Accessed February 27, 2013.

Inflammatory broadcasts from the Jehovah's Witness student group in Montreal in the 1920s resulted in a ban of all single faith radio stations for decades. Prime Minister Trudeau said that the poor treatment of Jehovah's Witnesses in Quebec inspired his desire to protect human rights, feeding into the development of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Challenges to religious freedom in Canada have long taken the character of both religious belief, but also identity and nationalist politics, often concomitant with language or culture. Canada's identity for much of its history has been predicated on the compromise of *les deux solitudes*, or the two solitudes, the perceived tensions, misrepresentations, and compromises between Anglophone and Francophone Canada.⁵ Only later in the twentieth century was this story updated to include First Nations,⁶ and later still to the language of official multiculturalism.

Janet Epp Buckingham is one of Canada's leading religious freedom experts, an intervener in multiple cases in Canada's Supreme Court when she served as chief legal counsel for the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and now Director of the Laurentian Leadership Centre for Trinity Western University. She is the central figure pushing for a new Christian law school at Trinity Western University.⁷ Her book, *Negotiating Religion: A legal and political history of religious freedom in Canada*,⁸ is a summary of years of arguing cases on religious freedom in Canada. She identifies three distinct themes in Canadian legal and political history as they relate to religious freedom.

First, there are the religious fault lines of Canada's beginnings, of the French Roman Catholic/English Protestant divide. *The Quebec Act of 1774* guaranteed the French settlers of what would be Canada the maintenance of their language, religion, and civil law. These

⁵ The term was popularized in Hugh MacLennan's novel, *Two Solitudes*. Former Governor General Michaëlle Jean specifically stated in her investiture speech that "the time of the two solitudes is finished" (2005). Those historic tensions are manifest still in tangible ways, like the official motto of Quebec: *je me souviens*, I remember. The reference is popularly understood, according to historian Mason Wade, to mean not only the memory of New France (pre-Confederation), but also the fact that Quebec is a conquered people. See, for more, the legacy of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham and Generals Wolfe and de Montcalm.

⁶ This is the accepted term for the various Aboriginal peoples of Canada who are neither Inuit nor Métis. There are currently 630 First Nations governments or bands in Canada.

⁷ Her work has garnered significant controversy, including for example an editorial from *The Globe and Mail* condemning her efforts: "No gay-free law school should stand in Canada" in *The Globe and Mail*, February 7, 2013. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/editorials/no-gay-free-law-school-should-stand-in-canada/article8356107/>. Accessed February 27, 2013.

⁸ Janet Epp Buckingham, *Negotiating Religion: A legal and political history of religious freedom in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, forthcoming 2013). Buckingham's book is far more descriptive and academic than her political and legal advocacy, but even so it is one of few book-length treatments of religious freedom in Canada. Much of the work on religious freedom, especially retrospective and historical work, tends to be case analysis or shorter monographs.

concessions were extraordinary, but also driven in part by the British experience of the American Revolution.

The *British North America Act*, now called the *Constitution Act, 1867*, therefore joined two dominant, religiously defined cultures into a single exercise of nation-building. In its negotiation, sections, such as Section 93, were provided to separate schools and grant provincial governments sole jurisdiction over key areas like education. Provinces acted on this power quickly, producing the Manitoba School Crisis, which resulted in a single, common school system in Manitoba. These same denominational school rights continue to produce controversy and litigation in Ontario.⁹ The story of two-founding, religiously and culturally defined, nations is key to the argument that Canada was never founded on disestablishment at all, but on a creative constitutional overlap between two dominantly Christian cultures. This should stress that the growth of *laïcité* is a mid-twentieth century *response* to a dominantly civil-religious political culture. The urgency and power of *laïcité* is often most marked, as Taylor himself has argued, when it has grown as a secularizing balance to a soft or more marked civil-religious state.

Indeed, the second theme, the protection of religious minorities, may well bear out the urgency of *laïcité* for Canadian culture and history. A founding mythology¹⁰ of two-nations eclipses religious minorities, especially First Nations spiritual beliefs. It was not until after the Second World War that strong lobbies from religious minorities, especially Jews and Jehovah's Witnesses, resulted in protections from discrimination. Secularization itself stressed the English and French rather than Protestant and Catholic nature of Canada's "founding nations," expediting this.

The protection of minorities was at the forefront of debates around *The Bill of Rights*, first called for publicly by Prime Minister Diefenbaker in 1943. It was finally adopted, in long political fashion, in 1960. Its preamble makes ample room for religion in Canadian society:

⁹ Bill-13 in the province of Ontario is intended to target bullying, with a major focus on homosexual-related bullying. One reason for the dispute is the legislative restriction placed on school board prohibiting gay-straight alliance clubs. Given the sensitive religious nature of claims on sexual orientation, this has been subject to challenges from Section 93 of the Constitution. See, for example, Eugene Meehan, "Constitutional Implications of Bill 13 Amendments" in *LexView 77.0*, September 2012. <http://www.cardus.ca/lexview/article/3566/>. Accessed February 27, 2013.

¹⁰ See for example Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

The Parliament of Canada, affirming that the Canadian Nation is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God, the dignity and worth of the human person and the position of the family in a free society of free men and free institutions; Affirming also that men and institutions remain free only when freedom is founded upon respect for moral and spiritual values and the rule of law.¹¹

The courts have interpreted the *Bill of Rights* as a quasi-constitutional document because all legislation passed by Parliament must conform to guarantees found therein.

The third theme is the rise of secularism. Buckingham means secularism in this instance as the slow eclipse of a dominantly Christian (Catholic and Protestant) culture in favour of an official position of “multiculturalism.” W.L. Morton writes that during the Victorian Era, the period in which Confederation took place, “Religion was . . . the chief guide of life for most Canadians; it touched all matters from personal conduct to state policy.”¹² Not until the 1960s did the census forms in Canada even allow for a response of “no religion.” That category in 1971 was 4%, but in 2001 it was 16%. This was the time of Quebec’s “Silent Revolution” (*Révolution tranquille*), a period of rapid and effective secularization of French society, the creation of the welfare state, and a realignment of politics into federalist and separatist, or sovereigntist, factions. John Webster Grant wrote of this time that “the nation had come to carry on its business as if the church were not there.”¹³ Despite this, the inscriptions of an earlier civil religion remained. Canada still had no official separation of church and state. Roman Catholic schools were publicly funded, religious charities took government funding, the national anthem and the *Charter* had references to God.

The most authoritative document is, of course, the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* itself, which was part of the repatriation of the Constitution¹⁴ and forms Part I of that Constitution. The *Charter* was brought into force on April 17, 1982. Lobbying – especially of religious groups – around the *Charter* was significant, but the preamble reflects the thinner, if

¹¹ *Canadian Bill of Rights*. S.C. 1990, c. 44. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-12.3/page-1.html>. Accessed February 27, 2013.

¹² W.L. Morton, “Victorian Canada,” in W.L. Morton (Ed), *The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 314.

¹³ John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1998), 224.

¹⁴ *The British North America Act, 1867* was an act of British Parliament, and therefore changes to Canada’s Constitution prior to repatriation were, technically, subject to approval by the United Kingdom. Repatriating the Constitution gave Canada’s federal government final authority over its constitution, subject to the Queen and her representative, the Governor General. The office of the Queen of Canada, although found in the same person as the office of the Queen of England, after 1982 became Queen in her own right of the Dominion of Canada, independent of her role as Queen of England, and other Commonwealth states.

persistent, consensus of the time. It reads: “Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law.”¹⁵

The argument for including this preamble was that it would prevent Canadian courts from adopting the anti-establishment approach of American courts. Even as recently, then, as the late twentieth century Canadian lawmakers and politicians favoured a religious establishment of Canada’s most basic definitions of freedom and rights.

Yet these official landmarks of Canadian political life came to be increasingly marginalized by the unwritten conventions of secularization. In February, 2007, this concern led Quebec premier Jean Charest, citing several instances of “unreasonable accommodation,” to appoint a two-man commission to investigate the issue of reasonable accommodation, as it relates to religious and cultural differences. The formal title is the *Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences*, though it is more generally known by the surnames of the two men appointed, *The Bouchard-Taylor Commission*. That Commission noted that, “during the public consultation held in the fall of 2007, Quebecers massively espoused the concept of secularism, one of the most frequently mentioned themes,” meaning “religion must remain in the private sphere.”¹⁶

Indeed, Janet Epp Buckingham argues that the preamble of the Charter is all but dead, citing Justice Southin of the British Columbia Court of Appeal, saying:

They have become a dead letter and while I might have wished the contrary, this Court has no authority to breathe life into them for the purpose of interpreting the various provisions of the Charter.¹⁷

According to Buckingham, “with the advent of the *Charter* in 1982, the process of secularization was accelerated.”¹⁸

¹⁵ *Constitution Act, 1982*. 1982, c. 11 (U.K.), Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html>. Accessed February 27, 2013. The Charter also lists as fundamental freedoms a) freedom of conscience and religion; b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and d) freedom of association. These are generally freedoms which are associated with the concept “Canadian values.”

¹⁶ Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, “Building the future: A Time for Reconciliation,” Abridged Report (Government of Quebec, 2008), 43.

¹⁷ *Regina (Crown) v. John Robin Sharpe*, 1999 BCCA 416, para. 79.

<http://canlii.ca/en/bc/bcca/doc/1999/1999bcc416/1999bcc416.html>. Accessed February 27, 2013.

¹⁸ Buckingham, 31.

As one would expect in a context with rivalries in religious freedom, contradictory cases do exist. Recently Justice Dugré of the Quebec Superior Court in the 2010 *Loyola High School* case specifically referred to the preamble of the *Charter* in finding that the Minister of Education could not “dictate to Loyola, a Catholic religious private school, the approach to the teaching of RCT [Roman Catholic Teaching].”¹⁹

What this theme of secularization should make clear is that definitions of religion and religious freedom have been under constant contestation in Canada. Canadian courts, and litigating strategies, have by and large depended on a definition of religion that is synonymous with conscience. In the 1985 case *Big M Drug Mart v. The Queen* the Supreme Court established a definition of religious freedom that forms the basis for all subsequent decisions.

A truly free society is one which can accommodate a wide variety of beliefs, diversity of tastes and pursuits, customs and codes of conduct. A free society is one which aims at equality with respect to the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms and I say this without any reliance upon s. 15 of the *Charter*. Freedom must surely be founded in respect for the inherent dignity and the inviolable rights of the human person. The essence of the concept of freedom of religion is the right to entertain such religious beliefs as a person chooses, the right to declare religious beliefs openly and without fear of hindrance or reprisal, and the right to manifest religious belief by worship and practice or by teaching and dissemination. But the concept means more than that.²⁰

Unfortunately the judgment goes on to discuss difficulties with freedom, but not religion. The definition of both what qualifies as “religious” and what qualifies as a “religious practice” has therefore been hotly contested and lies at the basis of rival versions of religious freedom. These domestic themes form a significant background for the rival versions of religious freedom which appear in Canada’s own debates on religious freedom abroad.

For example, in the 2010 *Ontario Human Rights Commission v. Christian Horizons*, the definition of what was religious or religious practice, and how it related to vocational practice, was central.²¹ The employer, Christian Horizons, had a lifestyle policy for employees, which prohibited certain behaviours, including extra-and pre-marital sex, using pornography, homosexual relationships, theft, fraud, abusive behaviour, lying, and deceit.

¹⁹ *Loyola High School c. Québec*, 2010 QCCS 2631, paras. 329-32.

<http://www.jugements.qc.ca/php/decision.php?liste=46252591&doc=7FF18D89A2AE5ADB9810CF4B60DAFD6CF774F8F11CE85819B903D21A6CECE9FD&page=1>. Accessed February 27, 2013.

²⁰ *R. v. Big M Drug Mart Ltd*, 1985 18125, para 94. <http://scc.lexum.org/decisia-scc-csc/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/43/index.do>. Accessed February 27, 2013.

²¹ *Ontario Human Rights Commission v. Christian Horizons*, 2010 ONSC 2105.

This was challenged by Ms. Connie Heintz, who in 1999 entered into a same-sex relationship, was issued a letter of discipline in August, 2000, and filed a human rights complaint in January, 2001.

Christian Horizons (CH) provided support services to persons regardless of religion. But at issue for the Tribunal was whether CH “was still “primarily engaged” in serving the interests of person identified by their creed. This was a requirement of the s.24(1)(a) statutory exemption from a charge of employment discrimination.”²² Further at issue was whether the lifestyle statement was a reasonable occupational qualification for a Christian Horizons support worker. The Tribunal found that neither of these requirements had been met.²³

The Tribunal was therefore placed in the unenviable position of not only determining whether certain religious beliefs and practices were, in fact, consistent with the religious integrity of the employer, but also whether these lifestyle practices were relevant to the vocation in question. This is one example of how the definition of the religious, and its freedoms, remains domestically contentious.

Internationally, Canada has both shaped and been shaped by the meanings of religious freedom in international treaties and documents. One of the most important of these, the first to define religious freedom in its modern sense, was written in the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948. It has a longer history, of course, arguably dating back to the Westphalian consensus of *cujus regio, ejus religio* – that a sovereign determines the convictions of the realm, a concession to the so-called religious wars of the seventeenth century. But even in that formulation, where state intervention on the basis of what became understood as religion was anathema, persecution of rival religious groups was – and remains – common place around the world. The U.N. declaration was designed to go a step further than condemning religious war between states. It condemned any practice of persecution based on creed or conviction, domestic or otherwise. It made religious freedom a human right. Article 18 reads:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in

²² Kevin Boonstra, “Associational Rights for Religious Communities,” in *LexView* September 2010 (Hamilton: Cardus). <http://www.cardus.ca/lexview/article/2201/>. Accessed March 8, 2013.

²³ Boonstra, “Associational Rights for Religious Communities,” in *LexView* September 2010 (Hamilton: Cardus). <http://www.cardus.ca/lexview/article/2201/>. Accessed March 8, 2013.

community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.²⁴

In 1976 two covenants with binding legal norms on international rights came into force: The *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*, both of which are now widely accepted. These covenants protect religious freedom, but the ICCPR is enforceable through the Human Rights Committee. The specific protection in the ICCPR extends in its own Article 18:

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief of his choice and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.
2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief of his choice.
3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.
4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.²⁵

Finally, *The U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religious Belief* sets out in considerable detail what the standards of the international community are regarding basic religious freedom.

Yet many of these declarations are not binding, precisely because the international community cannot agree on the meaning of religious freedom, especially on issues like the freedom to change religion. Some Islamic nations have been unwilling to consider this freedom, regarding such conversions as treason and apostasy, the penalty for which is often death. A well-known example of this is the 2006 apostasy and blasphemy charges against Afghan citizen Abdul Rahman for converting to Christianity, eventually resulting in his exile, rather than execution, only after substantial international pressure. Afghanistan's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, while at the same sustaining that no law can be made which contravenes Islam.²⁶ Such cases, one of many that could be chosen, demonstrate that though

²⁴ *The Universal Declaration Human Rights*. United Nations.

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>. Accessed February 27, 2013.

²⁵ *The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

<http://www.hrweb.org/legal/cpr.html>. Accessed February 27, 2013.

²⁶ See Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, *Silenced: How Apostasy and Blasphemy Codes are Choking Freedom Worldwide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 101-116.

within developed states like Canada, rival versions of religious freedom exist, globally these rival meanings can and do take on dangerous and repressive expressions. Without a serious examination of what is meant by the religious and the secular, the work of political theology, the uneven application of religious freedom will continue to appear as an imperfectly expressed western norm, rather than an at times rival way of imagining human political reality, a social imaginary.

The United Nations itself has several bodies that address religious freedom. The U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC), though famously discredited for the hypocrisy of its member states, has a rotating three year review process. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights could prioritize religious freedom. The Human Rights Committee reports to the Council and Canada, as well as anyone who else who has ratified the *Optional Protocol* to the ICCPR can petition the HRC to rule on a violation.

The most important office within the U.N. system is the Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom under the *U.N. Declaration*. The Special Rapporteur focuses specially on issues of discrimination on religious grounds. The Special Rapporteur reports to the HRC and speaks directly with countries on issues of religious freedom, and is empowered to make visits to that end. The sitting U.N. Special Rapporteur, Heiner Bielefeldt, spoke with the Canadian International Council²⁷ and invited guests for a moderated conversation on January 20, 2013, regarding at that time Canada's forthcoming Office of Religious Freedom.²⁸ His and guest comments are included in this analysis as part of the Canadian debate on the Office.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has an Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights which, among other things, helps promote religious freedom. In 1997 it established the Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief to raise issues.

There are countries that have their own offices of religious freedom. The Clinton administration founded the Office of International Religious Freedom in 1998, headed by an

²⁷ The Canadian International Council is Canada's foreign relations council, the equivalent of the American Council on Foreign Relations.

²⁸ See *Discussing Freedom of Religion or Belief*, at the Canada International Council's online portal: www.OpenCanada.org, <http://opencanada.org/features/the-think-tank/video/discussing-freedom-of-religion-or-belief/>. Other guests: MP David Anderson, MP Scott Reid, Dr. Malcolm Evans (Bristol), Dr. Nazila Ghanea-Herckock (Oxford), Dr. Janet Epp Buckingham (Trinity Western). Moderated by Robert Joustra. Accessed February 27, 2013.

Ambassador at Large, in the State Department. It advises the President and Secretary of State and its Ambassador serves as a diplomatic representative in cases of religious freedom. The U.S. Commission of International Religious Freedom was also established in 1998, comprised of ten commissioners who monitor religious freedom and advise the President and Congress. It has been criticized for merely “naming and shaming,” rather than constructively promoting religious freedom. The work of the American Office has been extremely important in shaping the Canadian Office, including its rationale for being structured around an Ambassador at Large. At the invited government consultations several high ranking members of both the Office and the Commission were present, including Thomas Farr, a long-serving American diplomat and recognized expert on religious freedom, and current American Ambassador for International Religious Freedom, Suzan Johnson Cook. These consultations and the American influence, as well as the perception of American influence, form an important part of the debate over the Canadian Office.

The United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office has a “Freedom of religion or belief toolkit,” which appears updated as recently as 2008. The German Bundestag passed a 2010 resolution establishing religious freedom as a human rights priority. In 1998 Norway convened a meeting on international religious freedom, forming the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief. While the Oslo Coalition works independently of the government, its ongoing funding indicates that Norway considers it a priority.

As can be seen, debates over the rival meanings of religious freedom are present not only in Canada, but also in many other states and international bodies. The thesis that these debates are representative of rival meanings of the religious and the secular is therefore almost certainly applicable outside of Canada, though this remains for further research into the meanings of the religious and the secular outside the Canadian context. Of importance to this analysis is the contextual influence that Canadian legal and political history, and the international environment, other states, and especially the United States, have had on these debates. Numerous non-governmental organizations, like Voice of the Martyrs, Human Rights without Frontiers, the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission, the Becket Fund, and more also work on religious freedom around the globe. These groups are only referenced in the debates insofar as they contributed directly to how Canadian religious freedom policy abroad should be defined. Generally, this means that domestic groups, like the Canadian Council of Churches, or the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, exercised more influence over these debates than many of the more recognized international organizations.

Given the focus on the Canadian *state*, and therefore on official Canadian foreign policy and the Office of Religious Freedom specifically, no overview of the often important role of non-governmental organizations is provided.

2.3 Two Rival Versions: Laïcité and Judeo-Christian Secularism

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd is a noted theorist of the religious and the secular in international relations,²⁹ and also a leading academic voice in America on issues arising from rival political definitions of religious freedom.³⁰ In her book, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*, she argues that the “social construction of secularism has taken two distinct paths in international relations: a laicist³¹ trajectory, in which religion is seen as an impediment to modern politics, and a Judeo-Christian secularist trajectory, in which religion is seen as the source of a unity and identity that generates conflict in modern international politics.”³²

For the purpose of this chapter, what should prove interesting is the similarity in this trajectory of secularism in international relations, and the political and legal context of the religious and the secular in Canada. Canadian Confederation was predicated on a compromise between, as Canada calls them, the two nations of English/Protestants and French/Catholics. The Quiet Revolution and the wide-scale secularization of Quebec produced a strong counter-culture of Francophone laïcité, increasing tension with the dominant Judeo-Christian, English Protestantism. These are the same marks of rival versions of the religious and the secular in the debates over the Office, which Hurd claims are intrinsic

²⁹ See Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) and editor with Linell E. Cardy, *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

³⁰ Hurd serves as guest editor, with Winnifred Fallers Sullivan of “The politics of religious freedom” on *The Immanent Frame: Secularism, religion, and the public sphere*. The project is defined as an ongoing discussion that “considers the multiple histories and genealogies of religious freedom – and the multiple contexts in which those histories and genealogies are salient today.” <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/the-politics-of-religious-freedom/>. Accessed February 27, 2013.

³¹ Hurd uses alternately laicism, laicist, and laïcité.

³² Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism*, 23.

also to international theory. This section will summarize her arguments,³³ against which debates on the Office will be compared for resonance in the next.

Laïcité, argues Hurd, is a widespread and deeply influential way of understanding the religious and the secular, nowhere more so than the academy. John Esposito writes, “Religious faith was at best supposed to be a private matter. The degree of one’s intellectual sophistication and objectivity in academia was often equated with a secular liberalism and relativism that seemed antithetical to religion. . . . Neither development theory nor international relations considered religion a significant variable for political analysis.”³⁴ In this view, “the mixing of religion and politics is regarded as necessarily abnormal (departing from the norm), irrational, dangerous, and extremist.”³⁵

Of its dimensions, Hurd argues there are several, including “the exclusion of religion from the spheres of power and authority in modern societies (structural differentiation), the privatization of religion, and a decline in church membership and potential disappearance of individual religious belief.”³⁶ These dimensions of laïcité have been alternately influential in a wide variety of contexts, including France, the former Soviet Union, Turkey, China, and elsewhere.

The term itself comes from the Jacobin tradition of *laïcisme*, and is suggestive of what Partha Chatterjee calls “a coercive process in which the legal powers of the state, the disciplinary powers of family and school, and the persuasive powers of government and media have been used to produce the secular citizen who agrees to keep religion in the private domain.”³⁷ José Casanova, echoing Taylor’s use of the Secular, says this privatization is “mandated ideologically by liberal categories of thought which permeate not only political ideologies and constitutional theories but the entire structure of modern Western thought.”³⁸ Talal Asad

³³ These can be found in chapter two of *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*, “Varieties of Secularism.” She lists in that chapter three major influences on the forms of secularism delineated in the book, José Casanova, Talal Asad, and Charles Taylor.

³⁴ John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 200.

³⁵ John L. Esposito, “Islam and Secularism in the Twenty-First Century,” in John L. Esposito and Azzam Tamini (Eds.), *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 9.

³⁶ Hurd, 29.

³⁷ Partha Chatterjee, “The Politics of Secularization in Contemporary India,” in Scott and Hirschkind, *Powers of the Secular Modern Talal Asad and His Interlocutors* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 60.

³⁸ José Casanova, *Public Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 215.

argues that laicism confines religious belief and practice “to a space where they cannot threaten political stability or the liberties of ‘free-thinking’ citizens.”³⁹

Most significantly for international relations, *laïcité* either expels religion from politics or assumes that it has been successfully privatized within the state. Hurd writes, “Laicism defines religion by designating that which is *not* religious: the secular. . . . Laicism attempts to set the terms for what constitutes politics and religion. This move is ambitious and contestable.”⁴⁰ These also depend, as Hurd argues, on the history of Latin Christendom, and the experiences of Westphalia and others, to provide context for the meaning of the religious to be comprehensibly distinct from something called the secular. This is one reason Charles Taylor argues that *laïcité* often emerges as a counter force, in reaction to a strong civil religion, usually Christian religious political culture.⁴¹ This, he says, was the case in France, where in order to be independent of the church, the state must have “une morale indépendante de toute religion” and enjoy a “suprématie morale” in relation to religion. Underlying the state’s morality is a “théologie rationnelle,” not unlike what Kant suggested. This kind of secularism is therefore often more aggressively rival to religion and religious politics because it is given its urgency by an already dominant political-theological regime. Taylor argues that the example of France can be paralleled to the case of Canada’s secularizing Silent Revolution.

Hurd writes,

By defining something called religion and working to exclude it from politics, laicism constructs and delimits the temporal domain in a particular fashion. This is a political move. It is also a theological one. Laicism marks out the domain of the secular and associates that domain with public authority, common sense, rational argument, justice, tolerance, and public interest. It reserves the religious as that which it is not, and associates it with a personal God and beliefs about God. Laicism, then is not the opposite of theological discourse. It enacts particular kind of theological discourse in its own right. In this discourse, religion is “treated as a universal term, as if ‘it’ could always be distilled from a variety of cultures in a variety of times rather than representing a specific fashioning of spiritual life engendered by the secular public space carved out of Christendom.”⁴²

³⁹ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 191.

⁴⁰ Hurd, 33.

⁴¹ Charles Taylor, “Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of the Secular,” in Mendieta, Eduardo and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (eds), *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 40.

⁴² Hurd, 35.

This has two important consequences for international relations. First, as Taylor observes with regard to global politics, “defined and pursued out of the context of Western unbelief, it understandably comes across as the imposition of one metaphysical view over others, and an alien one at that.”⁴³ It is Hurd’s view that that in attempting to legislate the terms through which the secular and the religious are defined, laicism rules out in advance other kinds of linkages between religion and spheres of power and authority.

Secondly, laicism not only produces a certain kind of politics, but it also produces a certain kind of religious subject. In presuming to distinguish between the transcendent and the mundane, and fix those boundaries socially and politically, it defines the starting point from which the religious experience and its actors, institutions, and communities can begin.

This means *laïcité* is generally suspicious of initiatives like the Office of Religious Freedom. The key for *laïcité* in religious freedom is not freedom of religion, but freedom *from* religion. It is true, of course, that *laïcité* supports the freedom of beliefs, but those beliefs, especially insofar as they are religious, in the way *laïcité* defines the religious, should be kept carefully separate from public and political life. Indeed, *laïcité* understands democracy as resting on secularity, and secularity as a neutral, rational, public space, which is therefore inherently non-religious. This space can also seem anti-religious because it actively suppresses religious manifestations or claims in public, but generally that suppression is limited only to public displays. The foreign policy options for the Office of Religious Freedom accompanying this approach are therefore about the orderly removal of the religious from the political orders of foreign partners. This guarantees “freedom of religion,” because no single religious perspective is installed that would persecute or marginalize others, and it would also safeguard the state’s political community from ideological and religious tyranny, an important first step toward a functional democracy. The specificity of these policies also becomes clear in the following debates over the Office itself.

As Taylor warns, however, a political system that replaces the religious with a comprehensive secular philosophy as its foundation risks making religious members into second-class citizens, since these citizens cannot embrace the rationale that are officially recognized philosophy.⁴⁴ In such an instance, the political system may end up simply

⁴³ Charles Taylor, “Modes of Secularism,” in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.) *Secularism and its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37.

⁴⁴ Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 13.

replacing established religion, including the core beliefs that define them. This is what Hurd means above when she says, “Laicism, then is not the opposite of theological discourse. It enacts particular kind of theological discourse in its own right.” Taylor recalls the experience of secularism versus Catholicism in France, or versus Islam in Turkey, both instances of *laïcité* emerging as a reaction against a formerly strong civil religious background. In these contexts secularism in its most radical form appealed to an independent morality founded on reason and on specific configurations of human nature. Taylor says, “That type of political system replaces established religion with secular moral philosophy.”⁴⁵ This, he says, is what Jean-Jacques Rousseau had in mind in his expression of moral and political philosophy as “civil religion.”

Table 1.1: Studying Rival Versions of Religious Freedom using Political Theology: *Laïcité* and Judeo-Christian Secularism

	Political Theology: the understandings and practices that political actors have about the meaning of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes legitimate political authority			
Rival Versions of Religious Freedom	Understanding and practice of the religious	Understanding and practice of the secular	Relationship between religious and secular	What constitutes legitimate political authority?
Laïcité	Transcendent, but privatized and individualized concept of religion	Neutral, rational, public, in principle its logic and social forms are accessible to all people	Antagonistic, the secular must be safeguarded from the religious to preserve the political	Only secular politics are legitimate, limited democratic progress can be made in religious states, reproducing religion-free politics produces better changes of a rational peace
Judeo-Christian Secularism	Transcendent, but privatized and individualized concept of religion	Neutral, rational, public, in principle its logic and social forms are accessible to all people	Mutually constitutive, while the two are separate, the secular owes its origins to JC tradition. Exclusivist claims only Judeo-Christian can produce secularity. Inclusivist that in Canada, so far, it has been Judeo-Christian tradition, but other traditions may also be able.	Limited democratic progress can be made apart from Judeo-Christian values at the basis of a political culture; best chance at peace is to replicate those values in a polity (whether via JC or others)

“While laicism seeks to define and confine religion to the private sphere,” writes Hurd, “Judeo-Christian secularism connects contemporary Western secular formations to a legacy of ‘Western’ (Christian, later Judeo-Christian) values, cultural and religious belief, historical practices, legal traditions, governing institutions, and forms of identification.”⁴⁶ Interestingly,

⁴⁵ Ibid, 14.

⁴⁶ Hurd, 38.

Hurd says that many Christians and Jews are not Judeo-Christian secularists, and that one does not need to be either Jewish or Christian to adopt the assumptions of Judeo-Christian secularism. The claim is as cultural and historical as it is religious. Says Hurd, “the common claim of Judeo-Christian secularism of all varieties . . . is that Western political order is grounded in a set of core values with their origins in (Judeo)-Christian tradition.”⁴⁷

This is an especially powerful claim in the United States of America. Hurd cites Catholics Fr. Richard John Neuhaus and John Courtney Murray, and no less than evangelical President George W. Bush in her arguments for the prevalence of Judeo-Christian secularism in America. In Canada, Neuhaus’s legacy is most obviously felt in the person of Father Raymond De Souza, a Catholic priest, confidant and consultant of the Office of Religious Freedom,⁴⁸ regular columnist for *The National Post*, the right-of-centre rival Canadian national newspaper to *The Globe and Mail*, and Editor of newly formed *Convivium* journal.⁴⁹ De Souza gave the eulogy at Neuhaus’s funeral,⁵⁰ entitling it, and later his new journal, after a favourite word and practice of Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, “The Great Convivium.”

Neuhaus argued that universally valid Catholic moral arguments should replace “secular” public godlessness and reclothe the naked public square as the basis of American identity, community, and foreign policy.⁵¹ Fr. De Souza has taken up that same argument, stating in *Convivium*, “We are convinced that religious faith is critical to our Canadian common life. That is a contested position today, as formidable forces seek to drive religion to the margins of public life. That’s not good for religion, but neither is it good for our common life.”⁵²

The argument of De Souza and Judeo-Christian secularists in Canada is not necessarily exclusivist, though there is a stated preference for the morals and foundations of Catholic moral arguments. It is an argument for religion understood more broadly as “an important constitutive role in this form of secular politics.”⁵³ It is, therefore, important to remember that there are a variety of discursive formations of Judeo-Christian secularism, some which doubt

⁴⁷ Hurd, 38.

⁴⁸ Fr. De Souza was present at closed door consultations on the Office in October, 2011, one of six invited panellists. See Louise Elliott, “Religious freedoms panel drawn largely from western religions,” *CBC News*, December 7, 2011. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2011/12/07/pol-religious-freedoms-panel.html>. Accessed February 28, 2013. He was also one of the few visited by the Ambassador in the week of February 11, prior to Dr. Bennett’s appointment on February 19, 2013.

⁴⁹ See <http://www.cardus.ca/convivium/>. The tagline of *Convivium* is “faith in our common life.”

⁵⁰ See http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/catholic_stories/cs0389.htm. Accessed February 28, 2013.

⁵¹ Hurd 38. See Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

⁵² “About the Convivium Project”, <http://www.cardus.ca/convivium/about/>. Accessed February 28, 2013.

⁵³ Hurd, 39.

that other religious traditions – especially Islam – are capable of sustaining the kind of strong moral foundations needed for liberal democracies, and others that are more open to faiths of many kinds articulating those claims. The difference between these trajectories can be thought of as exclusive Judeo-Christian secularism and inclusive Judeo-Christian secularism. What is consistent, of course, is that the religious is vital for a democratic political order, and further that to this point, the Judeo-Christian tradition presents the best evidence for sustaining such an order.

Hurd argues the exclusivist tradition is more explicit in the United States, and for that reason tends to be associated with American politics. Judeo-Christian secularism, she says, draws on a long tradition in which particular religious traditions are linked implicitly to the possibility of civilization. Most famously, she quotes Tocqueville:

In the United States it is not only more that are controlled by religion, but its sway extends over reason. . . . So Christianity reigns without obstacles by universal consent. . . . Thus while the law allows the American people to do everything; there are things which religion prevents them from imagining and forbids them to become. . . . Religion, which never intervenes directly in the government of American society should therefore be considered as the first of their political institutions.⁵⁴

Of Tocqueville, William Connolly argues, “Christianity does not need to be invoked that often because it is already inscribed in the prediscursive dispositions and cultural instincts of the civilization.”⁵⁵

“American politics” or “American religion” is therefore a central concern of Canadian laicists over the Office of Religious Freedom, especially since the structure and many consultants have come from the American Office. This concern recurs in the Canadian debates over the Office. It is precisely these exclusivist Judeo-Christian prediscursive dispositions that *laïcité* opposes.

Therefore Judeo-Christian secularism enacts its own kind of “theological discourse,” as Hurd has put it.

It diverges from laicism with regard to the role of Judeo-Christian tradition in the establishment and maintenance of the secularist “separation” of church and state. While laicism assumes that religion has receded out of modern spheres of authority and into the private realm or diminished altogether, Judeo-Christian secularism does

⁵⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 292.

⁵⁵ William Connolly, *Why I am Not a Secularist* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 24.

not make this assumption. . . . A *shared* adherence to a common religious tradition provides a set of publicly accessible assumptions within which democratic politics must be conducted. For Judeo-Christian secularists, the separation of church and state is a unique Western achievement that grew out of a shared adherence to a common set of European religious and political traditions. Christianity . . . led to secularism.⁵⁶

The implications for international relations can take on a polarizing quality. Hurd cites, for example, Samuel P. Huntington's argument about the clash of civilizations, the logic under which is largely religious, cultural, and linguistic. If the common cultural assumptions of the Judeo-Christian tradition make democratic politics possible, then where those assumptions are absent, undemocratic, possibly irrational politics may be the rule. Hurd writes, "The position that a Judeo-Christian secular common grounds ends abruptly at the edge of Western (Judeo-Christian) civilization leads to the defense of this ground against both internal and external enemies, resulting in what Connolly has described as civilizational wars of aggressive defense of Western uniqueness."⁵⁷ Neuhaus makes an explicit appeal to the civilizational value of the Judeo-Christian tradition, arguing that "those who believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus turn out to be the best citizens."⁵⁸

What this means for Canadian foreign policy is that a Judeo-Christian secularist approach to religious freedom will almost certainly default to the values, definitions, and meanings of the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is not *necessarily* the case that Judeo-Christian secularism is exclusive of other religious traditions, but it is certainly preferential, if not, in the case of exclusivism, essential, that a political community be sustained by this tradition. This means that in foreign policy it is those virtues and values, and its commensurate understandings of political legitimacy, that will be central in religious freedom advocacy. This may lead, as Hurd argues, to a marginalization of non-Western and non-Judeo-Christian perspectives on religion and politics. She writes, "In this way of thinking, on the one hand non-Westerns who do not advocate for Western forms of secularism are portrayed as children who refuse to acknowledge they are sick and need to stay in. On the other hand, those who *do* advocate for some form of secularism are subject to the charge from either abroad or at home that they are advancing pale imitations of a robust Western ideal, thereby departing from (and potentially betraying) indigenous tradition."⁵⁹ As is the case in the debates over the Office, these

⁵⁶ Hurd, 42.

⁵⁷ Hurd, 43.

⁵⁸ Richard John Neuhaus, *American Babylon: Notes of a Christian Exile* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 117.

⁵⁹ Hurd, 44.

concerns are widely represented by opponents of Judeo-Christian secularism, and by extension often opponents of the Office in general.

Hurd argues that *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism are the two dominant trajectories in international theory. There are, of course, more definitions of the secular as they relate to the study of global politics. Daniel Philpott, for example, lists nine, reproduced here in Table 1.2. An exhaustive survey of the secular and the religious in international theory is not the goal of this thesis, but it is instructive simply to note that while Hurd's trajectories may parallel the Canadian experience, in global politics itself there are far more penetrating and far-reaching disagreements over the meaning of the religious and the secular. Indeed, there is good reason to argue that even Philpott's summation is only of the meaning of the secular in Western international theory, just as the two rival versions of *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism are particular to Western theory and practice. That a great many more meanings of the religious and the secular exist outside Canada does not invalidate this argument, it only strengthens the urgency for a consistent, academic effort to disclose the many varying and global meanings of the religious and the secular in the practice and understanding of religious freedom, and beyond.

Table 1.2 Nine concepts of the secular⁶⁰

Positive or neutral	Negative
1. <i>Secular</i> means pertaining to the world outside the monastic sphere	5. <i>Secularization</i> is a decline in the number of individuals who hold religious beliefs
2. <i>Secular</i> means a concept or use of language that makes no specific reference to religion or revelation but is not necessarily hostile to them	6. <i>Secularization</i> is a decline in religious practice and community
3. <i>Secular</i> means a differentiation between religion and other spheres of society (political, economic, cultural, etc.) but not necessarily the decline of religion's influence	7. <i>Secularization</i> is a differentiation between religion and other spheres of society (political, economic, cultural, etc.) in a way that entails, and is part and parcel of, a long-term decline in the influence of religion
4. <i>Secular</i> describes a social context in which religious faith is one of many options rather than an unproblematic feature of the universe (Taylor 2007)	8. <i>Secularization</i> involves a decline of religious influence on politics, not because of a general long-term decline in religion but rather because of the intentional efforts of regimes to suppress it. This concept does not imply a decline in religious belief or practice
	9. <i>Secularization</i> is an ideology or set of beliefs that advocates the marginalization of religion from other spheres of life

⁶⁰ This table is reproduced from Daniel Philpott, "Has the Study of Global Politics Found Religion?" in *The Annual Political Science Review*. 2009: 12, 185.

2.4 The Assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti and the Office of Religious Freedom

Shahbaz Bhatti's meeting with the Prime Minister and other Ministers in February of 2011 was part of a broader strategy to fulfill a 2008 election platform promise for "a *new*, non-partisan democracy promotion agency that will help emerging democracies build institutions and support peaceful democratic change in repressive countries."⁶¹ This was a preamble, in some ways, for the closure of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, or Rights and Democracy, in April, 2012, an institution of such widespread dysfunction that even the government lost its patience with the arms-length rights body.⁶² Bhatti's visit came amid rumours of a general federal election, and his death on March 2, 2011, came just prior to the writs of election issued by Governor General David Johnston on March 26. The Office of Religious Freedom, a replacement for Rights and Democracy, and a fulfillment of the 2008 promise, was incorporated into the Conservative's 2011 election platform.

Conservative foreign policy focus on the rise of repressive and undemocratic laws was the result of consultations with those like Bhatti, but also rising evidence of relevant cases. The Pew Forum reports that a substantial portion of the world's population – 75% as of mid-2010 – "lives in countries where governments, social groups or individuals restrict people's ability to freely practice their faith."⁶³ Generally speaking, the report argues, taking government restrictions and social hostilities together, religious freedom is worsening across the globe. Bhatti's assassination, while a focusing event, was not an isolated incident.

The rise of blasphemy and apostasy laws has been well catalogued by Paul Marshall at the Hudson Institute, and according to him it is one of the most serious problems in global politics.⁶⁴ What first gained global attention via Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* has gained notoriety through such high profile cases as Theo van Gogh and Ayaan Hirsi Ali's

⁶¹ Emphasis added. Aaron Wherry, "The new office of religious freedom," *Macleans*, February 19, 2013. <http://www2.macleans.ca/2013/02/19/the-new-office-of-religious-freedom/>. Accessed March 1, 2013.

⁶² See Linda Frum, "The real trouble at Rights and Democracy: Sen. Linda Frum on the controversy; Paul Wells responds," in *Macleans*, March 22, 2010. <http://www2.macleans.ca/2010/03/22/the-real-trouble-at-rights-and-democracy/>. Accessed February 26, 2013. Also, "Mulroney-created Rights and Democracy getting shut down by Tories," *The National Post*, April 3, 2012. Accessed March 1, 2013.

⁶³ The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life is one of the most widely respected centres for this research. Many of its reports are available online, including "Rising Tide of Restrictions on Religion," September 20, 2012. <http://www.pewforum.org/Government/Rising-Tide-of-Restrictions-on-Religion-findings.aspx>. Accessed March 1, 2013.

⁶⁴ Paul Marshall, *Silenced: How Apostasy & Blasphemy Codes are Choking Freedom Worldwide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

feminist film *Submission*, the Danish and Swedish cartoons of Islam's prophet Mohammed, Pope Benedict's Regensburg speech on reason and violence in religion, Geert Wilders's deliberately provocative *Fitna* and the false *Newsweek* story that the U.S. military had desecrated Korans in Guantanamo Bay. Some events, like the obscure Florida pastor Terry Jones's attempt to burn the Koran, became a perfect media storm. One fringe pastor with a congregation of less than fifty dominated news cycles, drew in the American President, senior U.S. military leaders and cabinet officials, and dozens of people were killed.

Those who challenge the legal and political culture of blasphemy and apostasy from within are in some of the greatest danger. This was the case with Shahbaz Bhatti. Shahbaz Bhatti was made Minority Affairs Minister in 2008 and was reappointed in February, 2011, just before his murder. Bhatti used the position to secure government assistance for victims of religiously motivated mob violence, advocate publicly for reform of the blasphemy laws, and increase public focus on religious minorities' concerns. After his death, Dr. Paul Bhatti, his brother, was appointed as Advisor to the Prime Minister on Interfaith Harmony, a position he still holds. Bhatti's tireless opposition to blasphemy and apostasy laws earned the respect of Canada's Prime Minister, and several members of the Cabinet.

Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, who's also the party's point man for outreach to immigrant Canadians, said Mr. Bhatti made a major impression on Mr. Harper when they met in early February, 2011:

The Prime Minister was deeply affected by this as was everyone who had the chance to meet him. His visit to Canada shortly before his assassination helped to galvanize within the government the reality of this kind of persecution. . . . Just before I brought Shahbaz to meet the Prime Minister, I told the Prime Minister it would be a miracle if the man he was about to meet would be alive in a few months' time.⁶⁵

Minister Kenney is said to have counselled Mr. Bhatti against returning home. "Shahbaz was very conscious that in returning to Pakistan he would be facing not just the possibility but also the likelihood of assassination," the minister said.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Steven Chase, "Conservatives laying groundwork for Office of Religious Freedom" in *The Globe and Mail*, January 1 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/conservatives-laying-groundwork-for-office-of-religious-freedom/article1357558/>. Accessed February 26, 2013.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Yet Bhatti was aware that his life was in danger, leaving a video to be played in the event of his death. In the video Bhatti said he would not change his principles, and that he was prepared to die for his work.⁶⁷

He was shot and killed visiting his mother in Islamabad in March, 2011. Al-Qaeda and the Pakistan Taliban Movement in Punjab claimed responsibility in leaflets left at the scene. In Pakistan, few convicted of blasphemy and apostasy have been judicially executed, partly because of the length of trials, but also because mobs and vigilantes have killed hundreds of the accused.⁶⁸ Paul Marshall describes the culture of blasphemy as one of systematic intimidation, in which during elections, “the vast majority of Pakistanis rejected radical parties,” but freedom of press, debate, and religion are repressed by this terrorizing minority.⁶⁹ *The New York Times* said: “An intolerant, aggressive minority terrorizes a more open-minded, peaceful majority, while an opportunistic political class dithers, benefiting from alliances with the aggressors.”⁷⁰ When President Musharraf signalled a change in the laws, militants warned, “If the government tries to finish it, the government itself will be finished.”⁷¹

The limitations of the state are more than theoretical in Pakistan, they are dangerously practical. Yet there is reason to find hope among political elites in Pakistan. On March 9, 2011, Pakistan’s embassy in the United States held a memorial service for Bhatti, at which then Ambassador Husain Haqqani⁷² spoke:

My colleagues in the embassy – from all wings of the embassy, from our accounts department to our military leaders who serve here, to the diplomats, and to the non-diplomatic staff in this embassy – we all discussed this and it was our collective decision that we will not only pay tribute to Shahbaz Bhatti today but also to use this as an occasion to reiterate our commitment to a pluralist Pakistan, a tolerant Pakistan, a moderate Pakistan – a Pakistan in harmony with the rest of the world. . . .

⁶⁷ Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, *Silenced: How Apostasy & Blasphemy Codes are Choking Freedom Worldwide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 100.

⁶⁸ Akbar S. Ahmed, “Pakistan’s Blasphemy Laws.” Originally at *The Washington Post*. Found at: <http://www.thepersecution.org/news/wp020519.html>. The BBC suggests that with respect to blasphemy, “Hundreds of people have been lynched since the mid-1980s”; see “Blasphemer Attacked in Pakistan.” http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8189209.stm. Accessed February 26, 2013.

⁶⁹ Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, *Silenced*, 100.

⁷⁰ Sabrina Tavernise, “At Top University, a Fight for Pakistan’s Future.” *New York Times*, April 20, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/21/world/asia/21university.html>. Accessed February 26, 2013.

⁷¹ As quoted in Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, *Silenced*, 100.

⁷² Haqqani is now a Director with the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C. He served as Ambassador from 2008-2011.

Friends, it is incumbent upon us, both as Pakistanis and as Muslims, to not only embrace and respect all of the people of the Book – the people of the Old Testament, the people of the Gospel – but to honor them and protect them.

As it is written in the Holy Quran

“We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and what was given to Moses and Jesus the son of Mary and to the prophets from their Lord; we do not make any distinction between.

“He has revealed the Book with truth, verifying that which is before it, and He revealed the Torah and the Gospel, a guidance for the people.”

Islam reached out and incorporated the holy texts and holy prophets of other religions into its own, and we must revive that tradition of inclusiveness.⁷³

He concluded with this:

Those who would murder a Salman Taseer or a Shahbaz Bhatti deface my religion, my prophet, my Koran and my Allah. Yet there is an overpowering, uncomfortable, and unconscionable silence from the great majority of Pakistanis who respect the law, respect the Holy Book, and respect other religions. . . . This silence endangers the future of my nation and to the extent the silence empowers extremists, it endangers the future of peace and the future of the civilized world. . . . When Shahbaz Bhatti is murdered, and we remain silent, we have died with him.⁷⁴

The problem in countries like Pakistan, as those like Marshall have argued, is far more intractable than extremists that may be contained and eliminated. The problem is, precisely, this silence, a culture of intimidation and fear that prohibits Muslims and other communities from reformist practice and interpretation of the religious. Paul Marshall and Nina Shea argue that western governments fall victim to this intimidation when they embrace hate-speech bans, which “serve as proxies for Muslim blasphemy laws.”⁷⁵ Writes Marshall and Shea,

If Islam, and Islam alone, were to be protected by the state from critique, an illiberal interpretation of Islam would attain a de facto privileged status in the West. Conversely, should Christianity and other religions benefit from such state protection, fundamental individual freedoms would be essentially negated.⁷⁶

⁷³ As reported in “A Eulogy for Pakistan,” *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*. March 16, 2011.

http://www.rferl.org/content/pakistan_bhatti_washington/2340390.html. Accessed February 26, 2013.

⁷⁴ As reported in Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, *Silenced*, 100. Husain Haqqani was himself endangered by a trial facing allegations of treason in 2012 in the so-called “Memogate” affair in which he was accused of instigating an unsigned memo to the U.S. government warning of a military-coup plot against Pakistan’s government. Nina Shea speculated he was being targeted because of his support for people like Bhatti.

http://www.hudson.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=publication_details&id=8647. He has since returned to the Hudson Institute and as a professor of international relations at Boston University.

⁷⁵ Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, *Silenced*, 307.

⁷⁶ Marshall and Shea, 308.

Marshall and Shea's survey shows that in Muslim-majority countries and regions, restrictions on freedom of religion and expression, based on prohibitions of blasphemy, apostasy, and "insulting Islam" are pervasive, undermine freedom, and cause suffering to millions.⁷⁷ They write, "The practice of punishing blasphemy is an important weapon used by radicals in Islam's ongoing war of ideas."⁷⁸ In this context, it is the reformers like Bhatti who are most endangered.

Nasr Abu-Zayd argues that "charges of apostasy and blasphemy are key weapons in the fundamentalists' arsenal, strategically employed to prevent reform of Muslim societies and instead confine the world's Muslim population to a bleak, colorless prison of sociocultural and political conformity."⁷⁹ Marshall argues that accusations of blasphemy or insulting Islam are used systematically throughout the Muslim world to silence minorities, authors, journalists, and activists. In Saudi Arabia and Iran, he says, religious repression is not merely a quirk, it is at the heart of the regime's ideology. Dissidents and dissenters are charged with "friendship with the enemies of God," "hospitality towards friends of God," "fighting against God," "obstructing the way of God and the way towards happiness for all the disinherited people in the world," "dissension from religious dogma," "insulting the Prophet," "insulting Islam," "propagation of spiritual liberalism," "promoting pluralism," "calling into question the Islamic foundations of the Republic," and – somewhat incredibly – "creating anxiety in the minds of . . . Iranian officials."⁸⁰ The suppression of Islamic political theology, say Marshall and Shea, is felt not only in Muslim-majority states and regions but also in the West and across the world.⁸¹

This is the context within which the Conservative party launched its 2011 election platform, with the Office of Religious Freedom as a central piece of its promised foreign policy priorities.

⁷⁷ Marshall and Shea, 308.

⁷⁸ Marshall and Shea, 309.

⁷⁹ As quoted in Marshall and Shea, 330.

⁸⁰ Paul Marshall, "Why Religious Freedom must be a Top Priority" in *Cardus Policy in Public*, Winter 2011 (Vol. 4 No. 4), 42.

⁸¹ Marshall and Shea, 330-331.

2.5 Laïcité and the Office

In the Canadian debate between the assassination of Bhatti and the launch of the Office, the key advocates of laïcité, and for this reason also some of the key opponents of the Office, have been Doug Saunders from *The Globe and Mail*, Arvind Sharma from McGill University, and Paul Wells, an influential columnist with Canada's national newsweekly, *Maclean's*. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd was also highly critical of the Office and its potential abuse. Her comments in Canada, and certainly the popular use of those comments by Doug Saunders, could be considered to be advocating laïcité. For several reasons this does not seem likely, however, and though Hurd's comments on the Office will be treated in this section, context for those remarks in the form of her other work will suggest that her criticisms of Judeo-Christian secularism do not necessarily result in a defense of laïcité. Indeed, consistent with Taylor's suggestion that laïcité generally galvanizes around *opposition* to a strong civil-religious culture, the most powerful arguments for laïcité have, in fact, been arguments against Judeo-Christian secularism. For this reason, the arguments tend to be more reactionary.

Doug Saunders is a well-known British Canadian journalist, the international affairs columnist for Canada's paper of record, *The Globe and Mail*, its European Bureau Chief, and best-selling author of *Arrival City* and *The Myth of the Muslim Tide*. He is also one of the most outspoken critics of the Office of Religious Freedom. It is time, he has written, "to speak out against religious freedom."⁸² Saunders's arguments are evocative of the logic of laïcité, the dangerous political risks that are associated with religious expression outside the bounds of private life. He writes,

When groups of people exercise their self-proclaimed religious freedoms, terrible things tend to happen. The phrase religious freedom is evoked by Hindu nationalist parties in India to justify killing rampages in Muslim neighbourhoods, by the Buddhist-majority government of Sri Lanka to imprison members of the country's Hindu minority, by Jewish religious parties in Israel to call for the denial of Israeli Muslims' full citizenship rights, and by crowds of Salafists and Islamists in Egypt bent on ruining the lives of Coptic Christians.⁸³

⁸² Doug Saunders, "Religious Freedom sends the wrong message to the wrong people" in *The Globe and Mail*, October 6, 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/doug-saunders-religious-freedom-sends-the-wrong-message-to-the-wrong-people/article4591927/>. Accessed February 26, 2013.

⁸³ Ibid.

For the ardent religious believer, he argues, religious freedom often means the “right to restrict the freedoms of others, or to impose one’s religion on the larger world. That’s why the most important religious freedom is freedom *from* religion.” Contrary to Judeo-Christian secularism, Saunders says that “the core values of our common culture, the things that make us Western and modern – democracy, equality, the rule of law – were forged through the rejection of religion and the overthrow of spiritual authority.”⁸⁴ In his opinion, Canada should promote the “peaceful removal of faith from the state.”

Saunders himself characterizes two rival versions of religious freedom. In a *Globe and Mail* editorial in 2011 he wrote,

We are witnessing a showdown, across the West, between two competing definitions of “freedom of religion.” In one definition, the public sphere is a wide-open space: Citizens are free to try to impose religion, to invoke their gods in legislation, to wear whatever symbols they like. It’s a marketplace of beliefs, and may the strongest prevail.

In the other definition, that sphere is a neutral space: Religion is private and public places are unencumbered by competitions for divine supremacy. This definition recognizes that freedom of religion depends on a strongly defended freedom *from* religion.⁸⁵

Although to this point in his argument Saunders has approvingly quoted a lecture by Elizabeth Shakman Hurd at the University of Ottawa in October, it seems unlikely she would agree with this caricature, at least on the prospect of a supposed unencumbered, public neutrality that would result from the suppression of the religious. Of course, the imposition of religion is a key underlying concern of laicism, recalling as it does the thick English-Protestant/French-Catholic secularism of Canada’s past.

In his own critical response to the Office, Arvind Sharma argues that Judeo-Christian secularism casts a long shadow on the Office. In an interview with the CBC, he expressed anxiety about the connection to American civil-religion:

The [U.S. officials] tends to recognize and emphasize violations of rights of Christian minorities and Christian evangelical groups to proselytize, rather than using the term

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Saunders, “The problem in public life isn’t Islam, but religion itself” in *The Globe and Mail*, February 18, 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/doug-saunders/the-problem-in-public-life-isnt-islam-but-religion-itself/article2342413/>. Accessed February 26, 2013.

“religious freedom” to cover the religious freedom of all communities. So this is a very deep bias.⁸⁶

The absence of other world religions in government consultations, notably what Sharma calls non-Western ones, was also a key concern for him, a point he makes at greater length in his 2011 book, *Problematizing Religious Freedom*. He writes,

The current concept of religious freedom operates with a Western concept of religion which involves the notion of exclusive religious affiliation, or the view that one may belong to only one religion at a time, and that the contours of the concept of religious freedom change significantly when one operates with . . . an Asian concept of religion, which permits multiple religious affiliation.⁸⁷

Further to this, Sharma argues that not all definitions of religion, notably some variations of Islam, accept conversion as a legitimate freedom of religion. This was certainly in evidence in the negotiation of key international documents on religious freedom, and in the 2006 trial of Abdul Rahman in Afghanistan. All of this sustains a parallel conclusion to this thesis, that “the concept of religious freedom cannot be divorced from the concept of religion.”⁸⁸

But Sharma’s response is driven by a reaction to the supposed Judeo-Christian bias of the, at the time, non-existent Office of Religious Freedom. In a popular piece for *The Mark News*, he argued that “religious freedom [is] compliments of the West,” and, more odiously, that “the promotion of the western concept of religious freedom (which encourages people to be open to changing their religions) comes across as a cover for predatory Christian proselytization.”⁸⁹

His solution is more difficult to agree with, arguing that “followers of proselytized religion are justified in imposing restrictions on the proselytizing activities of the proselyting religions, in order to prevent the violation of the principle of non-interference in the pursuit of

⁸⁶ Louise Elliott, “Religious freedoms panel drawn largely from western religions.” CBC, December 7, 2011. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2011/12/07/pol-religious-freedoms-panel.html>. Accessed February 26, 2013.

⁸⁷ Arvind Sharma, *Problematizing Religious Freedom* (London: Springer, 2011), 12. Although most the sources covered in this debate are media, journals, and speeches, Sharma’s book, published in 2011 in response to this new priority of the Conservative government fits the stated framework of the debate between March 2011 and February 2013.

⁸⁸ Sharma, 255.

⁸⁹ Arvind Sharma, “Religious Freedom, Compliments of the West” in *The Mark News*, December 6 2011. <http://www.themarknews.com/articles/7670-religious-freedom-compliments-of-the-west/#.UJp01MXoSUK>. Accessed March 1, 2013.

one's religion."⁹⁰ Such an opinion contradicts basic Canadian values outlined in the Charter and the Constitution, but it also neglects the arguments of Hurd to this point that the repression of varying forms of the religious, including proselytization, forms its own – in her words – discursive hegemony. Further, the premise that proselytization consists only in explicit expression runs at odds with Taylor's argument that "if an understanding makes a practice possible, it is also true that it is the practice that largely carries the understanding."⁹¹ Restrictions on proselytization not only privileges the dominant secular regime's religious/secular discourse, it may also provide an intolerable restriction on the definition of the religious. Sharma's response to the religious problem with religious freedom seems to be a sharper, more privatized *laïcité*, until co-religious debate is stripped from not merely political, but also public space. This has the ironic consequence of arguing for greater restriction in the name of a deeper pluralism. The logic of this is laicist because it supposes that the suppression of the religious in public produces an inclusive neutrality, rather than an enlargement of the dominant discursive settlement of the secular and the religious. It is further laicist because it presumes that the practices of the religious are not, as Taylor says, in and of themselves intrinsic to, rather than exogenous or secondary, belief. This is an argument that Saba Mahmood makes at greater length about the women's piety movement in Egypt, and the religious practice of the veil, in her well recognized book, *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*,⁹² which was the subject of an interview with the CBC on October 24, 2012.

Macleans and the Canadian International Council (the CIC) made more explicit criticisms of the Office of Religious Freedom, titling its first series of expert reflection "The New Missionaries: Should Canada Promote Religious Freedom Abroad?"⁹³ Edited by *Macleans*'s Paul Wells, the symposium worked within this explicit missiological framework, asking – on several points – whether promoting religious freedom was not the same as promoting religion

⁹⁰ Sharma, *Problematizing Religious Freedom*, 256.

⁹¹ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 25.

⁹² Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). In her book, Mahmood argues that the veil is not best understood as a manifestation of belief, but rather as a practice which *produces* belief. Mahmood came into the Canadian debate when interviewed at length by CBC's David Cayley on her book, on October 24, 2012. Her 54:00 minute interview was part 3 of a 7 part series entitled, "The Myth of the Secular."

<http://www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/Ideas/ID/2295911408/?page=2>. Accessed March 1, 2013.

⁹³ Canadian International Council, "The New Missionaries: Should Canada Promote Religious Freedom Abroad?" http://www.opencanada.org/the_new_missionaries/. Accessed March 1, 2013.

itself, and whether the government of Canada should have any role in such an exercise.⁹⁴ Two of the three defenders were Americans, Thomas Farr and Allen Hertzke, serving to enlarge the fears of Canadians already concerned that American Judeo-Christian civil-religion was creeping into Canadian foreign affairs via a parallel Office and structure to the United States.

American parallels are common. In the *Toronto Star*, Tony Burman, former head of Al Jazeera English and CBC News, discusses “Why faith and politics are a toxic brew.”⁹⁵ Burman writes, “The Canadian ‘Office’ is based on a similar U.S. government initiative, criticized for choosing its targets primarily to further American political interests. It is not surprising that the toxic blend of religion and politics in the U.S. has influence well beyond its borders, whether in Afghanistan or Canada.”⁹⁶

The CIC later balanced these more laicist responses with a roundtable of international experts from outside the United States, including United Nations Special Rapporteur Heiner Bielefeldt, MP David Anderson, Dr. Malcolm Evans from Bristol University, Dr. Nazila Ghanea-Hercock from Oxford, and Janet Epp Buckingham from Trinity Western University. As a backgrounder to the conversation, Baha’i researchers from their community in Canada, Geoffrey Cameron and Eric Farr, argued for the positive, principled role of Canada in the future of religious freedom.⁹⁷

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd contributed to the debate in *The Globe and Mail*, a lecture at the University of Ottawa, and in Canada’s foreign policy newsweekly, *Embassy*.⁹⁸ Her arguments

⁹⁴ See especially Janet Keeping, Tony Burman, and Daniel Dennett in opposition: <http://opencanada.org/features/the-think-tank/comments/religious-freedom-caution/>, <http://opencanada.org/features/the-think-tank/video/tony-burman-keep-faith-out-of-foreign-policy/>, <http://opencanada.org/features/the-think-tank/interviews/daniel-dennett-religious-freedom-must-not-be-elevated-above-other-rights/>. Accessed March 1, 2013.

⁹⁵ Tony Burman, “Why faith and politics are a toxic brew,” *Toronto Star*, February 25, 2012. http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2012/02/25/burman_why_faith_and_politics_are_a_toxic_brew.html. Accessed March 3, 2013.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Geoffrey Cameron and Eric Farr, “Canada and the Future of Religious Freedom,” in *OpenCanada.Org: Canada’s International Affairs Hub*, a project of the Canadian International Council, January 16, 2013. <http://opencanada.org/features/the-think-tank/comments/canada-and-the-future-of-religious-freedom/>. Accessed March 1, 2013. Cameron and Farr certainly do not advocate laïcité, but are part of an emerging third perspective on the religious and the secular which is described in the final chapter as “principled secularism.” They are not laicists, but neither – as Baha’i – are they Judeo-Christian secularists.

⁹⁸ In *The Globe and Mail*, October 17, 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/the-hegemony-of-religious-freedom/article4617004/>. At the University of Ottawa, October 2, 2012. <http://cips.uottawa.ca/should-canada-promote-religious-freedom/>. In *Embassy*, October 10, 2012. <http://www.embassynews.ca/opinion/2012/10/09/should-canada-promote-religious-freedom/42595>. Accessed February 26, 2013.

were the most academic, though even so she responds to the problem of the Office head on, arguing it “empowers religious leaders at the expense of dissenters, doubters, and those on the margins.”⁹⁹ In this, she shares perspectives with Doug Saunders, who quotes her approvingly in his *Globe and Mail* editorial of October 6. The “exportation” of “American invented” religious freedom can do far more harm than good, she suggests in her own *Globe* editorial. Such a reification and projection of the “religious” affords only certain kinds of “right” religion. She cites her co-editor on “the politics of religious freedom” at *The Immanent Frame*, Winnifred F. Sullivan, that “the right kind of religion, the approved religion, is always that which is protected, while the wrong kind, whether popular or unpopular, is always restricted or even prohibited.”¹⁰⁰

But unlike Saunders, her solution is not a further retrenchment of *laïcité*. In fact, her proposed solution remains far from clear in her advice for the Canadian Office of Religious Freedom. She writes,

Religious freedom needs to be reimagined as a site of resistance against powerful authorities, rather than a form of discipline imposed by them, funneling people into predefined religious boxes and politicizing their differences.¹⁰¹

Although this reimagining may prove of academic interest, it is difficult to understand how such a renewed imagination can practically support the Office which must by political necessity define its intentions on the meaning of religious freedom, and the definition of the religious and the secular. Saunders and others may well have read Hurd wrongly in their arguments citing her for *laïcité* as an approach to religious freedom, but her serious lack of political clarity on the topic of a political Office made this more likely.¹⁰²

Saunders, Sharma, and Hurd are not alone, of course. Only days after the launch of the Office, *iPolitics*, Canada’s daily aggregator for political insiders, featured well-known conservative Tasha Kheiriddin, asking, “Why an office of religious freedom? God only

⁹⁹ University of Ottawa CIPS Blog, “Should Canada Promote Religious Freedom?” October 2, 2012. <http://cips.uottawa.ca/should-canada-promote-religious-freedom/>. Accessed February 26, 2013.

¹⁰⁰ Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*, 155.

¹⁰¹ Hurd, “The Hegemony of Religious Freedom” in *The Globe and Mail* October 17, 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/the-hegemony-of-religious-freedom/article4617004/>. Accessed February 26, 2013.

¹⁰² This is a criticism that Geoffrey Cameron picks up in his response to Doug Saunders and Elizabeth Hurd in “Religious freedom is a human right, not a hegemonic project,” *Embassy*, October 17, 2012. <http://www.embassynews.ca/opinion/2012/10/16/religious-freedom-is-a-human-right-not-a-hegemonic-project/42641>. Accessed March 2, 2013.

knows.”¹⁰³ She argued that launching the Office, and in her opinion elevating religious freedom above other freedom, “violates the principle of separation of church and state.”¹⁰⁴ In the accompanying political cartoon (Figure 1), the accusation is that in order to move religious freedom in as a priority, a neutral, rational, scientific agenda has to be moved out.

Figure 1. Source: Tasha Kheiriddin, “Why an office of religious freedom? God only knows,” *iPolitics*, February 21, 2013.



2.6 Judeo-Christian Secularism and the Office

Advocates of *laïcité* argue, perhaps rightly, that the default position of Canada’s government and political culture is Judeo-Christian. The evidence for this is historical, legal, political, and

¹⁰³ Tasha Kheiriddin, “Why an office of religious freedom? God only knows,” *iPolitics*, February 21, 2013. <http://www.ipolitics.ca/2013/02/21/why-an-office-of-religious-freedom-god-only-knows/>. Accessed March 2, 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

cultural: Canada's two founding nations, French/Catholic and English/Protestant, the inscribed privilege of those traditions in Constitution and law and precedence, and finally the influence of American Judeo-Christian secular conservatism on the Canadian Conservative party. Although since the Silent Revolution a second, powerful tradition of *laïcité* has also persisted on the Canadian political landscape, the reactionary nature of this tradition also speaks to the powerful precedence of the Judeo-Christian story in Canada.

Yet, unlike America, Canada has no Puritan mythology,¹⁰⁵ no parallel, powerful evangelical political activism seeking to extend a "hegemony" of religious freedom. Some Canadian journalists, notably Marci MacDonald, have laboured to uncover a Judeo-Christian agenda at the heart of Canada's Conservative party,¹⁰⁶ but provocative as her thesis is, scholars of religion and religious freedom in Canada have largely dismissed the study for being riddled with extensive factual errors.¹⁰⁷ Despite Marci MacDonald, Doug Saunders, and others, there is very little evidence of an exclusivist Judeo-Christian agenda in debates over the Office, but there remains a significant legacy of inclusive Judeo-Christian secularism, which is taken as the meaning of Judeo-Christian secularism hereafter. Indeed, Judeo-Christian secularism persists if only because the experience of Canadian secularity is negotiated from within a French/Catholic and English/Protestant history.

Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. John Baird, has gone to great length to demonstrate the government's pragmatic, democratic approach to religious freedom, but he also made a deliberate attempt to connect this pragmatism to a tradition in Canadian values. In a speech from October, 2011, Minister Baird cited Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, a quote that the Prime Minister recalled again on February 19, 2013, in his speech launching the Office:

I am a Canadian . . . free to speak without fear, free to worship God in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, free to choose

¹⁰⁵ See especially Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American Diplomacy* (New York: Knopf, 2012) and Jon Meacham, *American Gospel: God, The Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Random House 2007).

¹⁰⁶ Marci McDonald, *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada* (Random House, 2010).

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Ray Pennings in *The Globe and Mail*. "Religious faith is the civic oxygen of our social ecology", June 2, 2010. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/religious-faith-is-the-civic-oxygen-of-our-social-ecology/article1371878/>. Pennings writes, "Author Marci McDonald's latest book, *The Armageddon Factor*, mocked for its sky-shouting alarm about a purported Christian putsch in Canadian federal politics, has been dismissed by its harsher critics as delusional rubbish being pushed through the public square. And yet, Ms. McDonald's face-off with public faith deserves a second look, at least for what it says about the suspicion and hostility many Canadians harbour toward mixing religious and political belief." Accessed February 26, 2013.

those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and mankind.¹⁰⁸

In sustaining the Office with a narrative of freedom, peace, and security, Minister Baird reiterates a key message of the Conservative government that they are not innovating, but rather restoring, or building on, fundamental Canadian values. These values are typically expressed in secular language, though individual Members of Parliament are open to, and sometimes do, express those values within the Judeo-Christian consensus of English and French Canada.¹⁰⁹ Yet even for these Members, such a framework is not an exclusivist project, but rather a historical recognition that the Judeo-Christian tradition and its values produced the secularism now called multiculturalism. The essential disagreement with laicists, then, is whether that mid-century transition was one of continuity or breakage. In fact, contrary to the argument of those like Doug Saunders, the Minister said explicitly at a religious liberty dinner in Washington in May, “We know that freedom of religion does not mean freedom from religion.”¹¹⁰ Judeo-Christian secularism in Canada, and the kind Minister Baird and other Members appeal to, is an argument for continuity in values, history, and tradition, not of disruption.

On that continuity, the Minister, as well as Member Bob Dechert, parliamentary secretary to the foreign affairs minister, have been very clear. At the second annual Parliamentary Forum on Religious Freedom in April, 2012, Mr. Dechert said, “Canada is a place where religious freedom is part of our fundamental core values. If we’re not willing to stand up and say this is a Canadian value, then we’re denying our heritage.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Address by Minister Baird at Office of Religious Freedom Stakeholder Consultations, October 3 2011. <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/speeches-discours/2011/2011-034.aspx?lang=eng&view=d>. Accessed March 1, 2013. Address by the Prime Minister, “PM delivers remarks on the establishment of the Office of Religious Freedom,” February 19, 2013. <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=5310>. Accessed March 1, 2013.

¹⁰⁹ For example, the host of the Parliamentary Forums on Religious Freedom, Mr. David Anderson, Member of Parliament for Cypress Hills-Grasslands, and Mr. Bev Shipley, behind Motion-382: motion on religious freedom as a priority for Canadian diplomats and foreign affairs, filed May 29, 2012. It is important to note that though MPs are members of the government, and their views on religious freedom may be symbolic of other Member’s views, these opinions are not official government positions.

¹¹⁰ Address by Minister Baird at Religious Liberty Dinner, May 24, 2012. <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/speeches-discours/2012/05/24a.aspx?lang=eng&view=d>. Accessed February 26, 2013.

¹¹¹ As heard at the Second Annual Parliamentary Forum on Religious Freedom, April 2, 2012. Ottawa, The Government Conference Centre. Also reported by Taline Bedrossian, “Religious freedom has ‘trickle down effect’ on rights: Tory MP,” *Embassy*, April 11, 2012. <http://www.embassynews.ca/news/2012/04/11/religious-freedom-has-trickle-down-effect-on-rights-tory-mp/41460>. Accessed March 2, 2013.

Minister Baird has even recalled the words of American President, Franklin Roosevelt, in the same speech at the stakeholders consultations in October, 2011, saying,

Where freedom of religion has been attacked, the attack has come from sources opposed to democracy. Where democracy has been overthrown, the spirit of free worship has disappeared. And where religion and democracy have vanished, good faith and reason in international affairs have given way to strident ambition and brute force.¹¹²

American connections to the Office of Religious Freedom buttress the concerns of laicists, who worry that American-style religious freedom is really a project of Judeo-Christian proselytization in disguise. American political culture tolerates civil-religious language and justifications in a way that Canadian political culture does not. A clear example of this would be the importance of the Christian religious affiliation of the American President, versus the clear liability that Prime Minister Stephen Harper's similar evangelical Christian faith has been to him and his party. Harper's faith has, in fact, been at the centre of concerns over his "secret agenda," a supposed moral and religiously conservative series of actions opposition warned he would take if ever elected to a majority parliament.

But Jonathan Malloy, an academic who studies religion and politics at Carleton University argued in *The Globe and Mail* that, "for all the concern about a Harper secret agenda against abortion and gay rights, this [the Office] is the real stuff that brings Conservatives and evangelicals closer together. The prospective effect of this office of religious freedom is almost beside the point. This is a low-cost, high-yield pledge that resonates deeply with evangelicals, without the divisive risks of explosive sexuality issues."¹¹³ This connection to "American and evangelical-style religious freedom" immediately raises Arvind Sharma's specter of "predatory Christian proselytization."

Some saw the idea of an Office of Religious Freedom as a replacement for the former Rights and Democracy, which proved "insufficiently supportive of Israel," and an attempt

¹¹² Address by Minister Baird at Office of Religious Freedom Stakeholder Consultations, October 3 2011. <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/speeches-discours/2011/2011-034.aspx?lang=eng&view=d>. Accessed February 26, 2013.

¹¹³ Jonathan Malloy, "Hidden in plain sight: The Tory evangelical factor," *The Globe and Mail*, April 13, 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/hidden-in-plain-sight-the-tory-evangelical-factor/article576262/>. Accessed March 2, 2013. See also John Ibbitson, "Religious-freedom office shows lack of Conservative hidden agenda," *The Globe and Mail*, February 19, 2013. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-notebook/religious-freedom-office-shows-lack-of-conservative-hidden-agenda/article8822804/>. Accessed March 2, 2013.

consolidate voter support among immigrant Coptic and Pakistani Canadian Christians. Haroon Siddiqui wrote for the *Toronto Star*:

The Conservatives also wooed the Coptic Christian and Pakistani Canadian Christians in the GTA with a foreign policy pledge: establishing the Office of Religious Freedom. This was widely taken to mean advocating mostly for Christians and other minorities in Muslim nations. While Baird makes perfunctory references to the beleaguered Muslim minority in Burma, he has little or nothing to say about plight of other religious groups, such as the Shi'ites in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, or Sufi Muslims in Pakistan. This discredits the core Canadian value of universal human rights.¹¹⁴

Religious freedom itself has suffered as a concept from alignment with American interests in Canada. Sheema Khan writes of the U.S. State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom, for *The Globe and Mail*, that "for years, 'religious freedom' was seen as code for 'Christian evangelizing,' and the agency's effectiveness had diminished as a result of internal bickering and claims of religious bias. A former staffer recently filed a complaint against the commission, alleging discrimination against Muslims."¹¹⁵

Concern over a pro-Israel, pro-Christian, American-style agenda was central in the minor media cycle that was made out of official panellists at an October, 2011, consultation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Office. These included:

- Thomas Farr, first director of the U.S. Office of International Religious Freedom.
- Father Raymond de Souza, Roman Catholic priest and columnist.
- Anne Brandner of the Global Peace Initiative, formerly of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.
- Don Hutchinson, vice-president with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).
- Frank Dimant, CEO of B'nai Brith Canada.
- Susanne Tamas of the Baha'i Community of Canada.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Haroon Siddiqui, "Prime Minister Harper's foreign policy hobbled by ideology," *Toronto Star*, October 13, 2012. http://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorialopinion/2012/10/13/prime_minister_harpers_foreign_policy_hobbled_by_ideology.html. Accessed March 2, 2013.

¹¹⁵ Sheema Khan, "Who monitors our new religious freedom monitor?," *The Globe and Mail*, June 8, 2011. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/who-monitors-our-new-religious-freedom-monitor/article582520/>. Accessed March 2, 2013.

¹¹⁶ As reported in Louise Elliott, "Religious freedoms panel drawn largely from western religions," *CBC News*, December 7 2011. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2011/12/07/pol-religious-freedoms-panel.html>. Accessed March 1, 2013. See also Louise Elliott, "Memos anticipate religious freedom office sensitivities," *CBC News*, December 3, 2011. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2011/12/03/pol-office-religious-freedom.html>. Accessed March 2, 2013.

Concern was focused not only on panellist's religious affiliations, all but one from the Judeo-Christian tradition, but also by the strong affinity expressed with the American Office and its work on religious freedom. Shortly before the election of 2011, Fr. De Souza wrote, "The American experiment launched under Clinton and Albright is worthy of emulation."¹¹⁷ Thomas Farr was the architect and first director of the U.S. Office, and Anne Brandner and Don Hutchinson both had past affiliations with the EFC, an unabashedly evangelical advocacy group in Ottawa.

Yet the secretive nature of the consultations appears exaggerated by press reports, eventually prompting one panellist, Don Hutchinson, to write a response, "I admit it: I was a panellist at the consultations for new office of religious freedom."¹¹⁸ He wrote,

Well, there you have it. I've been outed by the CBC. Yes, it's true. I was a panellist at the Department of Foreign Affairs consultation on establishing an Office of Religious Freedom. I don't know the selection process for attendees or for the panellists either . . . I didn't ask. They didn't tell.

It is disappointing that the CBC's coverage of the development of this new Office evidences the long since disproven view that secularism would triumph in global affairs, a bias that required religion to be set aside in Western engagement with other nations.

The CBC's description that the consultation was "clothed in secrecy" evidences that . . . the secret wasn't well kept – given that the CBC put together a program on the consultation a week before it occurred and other journalists found their way to attend.

Hutchinson goes on to argue that the government hosted a variety of consultations, many of which, despite his record and enthusiasm on the topic, he was not invited to. Minister Baird's own office was quick to counter that this specific consultation was open to "everyone who expressed interest," while some select invitations were extended to those with a greater track record in promoting religious freedom.¹¹⁹ This has done little to forestall criticism. Subsequent consultations with America's Ambassador for International Religious Freedom, Suzan Johnson Cook, have galvanized opposition to the Canadian Office over the fear it will mimic its American counterpart, including what they perceive as its civil-religious tone.

¹¹⁷ Father Raymond J. de Souza, "Foreign Affairs needs to get religion," *The National Post*, April 28, 2011. <http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2011/04/28/father-raymond-j-de-souza-foreign-affairs-needs-to-get-religion/>. Accessed March 2, 2013.

¹¹⁸ Don Hutchinson, "I admit it: I was a panellist at the consultations for new office of religious freedom," *The National Post*, December 12, 2011. <http://life.nationalpost.com/2011/12/12/i-admit-it-i-was-a-panelist-at-the-consultations-for-new-office-of-religious-freedom/>. Accessed March 2, 2013.

¹¹⁹ See Louise Elliott for the *CBC*, December 7 and December 11.

Fr. De Souza's enthusiasm after the launch of the Office in 2013, and his explicit advocacy for "faith in our common life,"¹²⁰ are a final example of both the persistence of an inclusive Judeo-Christian perspective on religious freedom, and the sharp disagreement with *laïcité* opposition to the Office. On February 23, 2013, De Souza wrote an explicit defense of a religious Canada, in "A religious Canada, strong and free" in *The National Post*:

The prime minister . . . explained why it is that religious liberty is the first liberty — in the Magna Carta, in the American Bill of Rights, and yes, in our Charter of Rights of Freedoms. If a person is not free before God, is not free in his conscience, then there is no basis for his freedom before the state, and his property and other rights are of little avail. The state that claims the right to interpose itself between man and God is by definition a totalitarian state, even if should be a softer sort of totalitarianism, at least at first.

A discordant note was sounded by the national media present in Maple, who framed their questions as if this were a clever political trick by the federal government, slipping a little Christian proselytism by the Ahmadiyya Muslims who hosted the event with great pride and enthusiasm.

The prime minister came . . . to make a foreign policy announcement. The reaction of some was that it was a foreign country. It's not. It's the new Canada, and the best part of it.¹²¹

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has defined *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, and shown evidence for these rival approaches to the religious and the secular in debates over the Office of Religious Freedom in Canada between March, 2011, and February, 2013. It has argued that the Canadian context is especially relevant to broader debates about religious freedom, given its situation between the United States and Europe, and its historical foundation in the English/Protestant and French/Catholic traditions. In Canada, therefore, two rival versions of religious freedom can be seen at work in the public debate leading up to the establishment of the Office. The next chapter argues that these rival versions of the religious and the secular are, in fact, part of a broader, Secular transformation, what Charles Taylor calls the modern social imaginary. The invention of the religious and the secular intrinsic to this imaginary is common to both *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, an important reason for why the rival

¹²⁰ The tagline of his journal, *Convivium*.

¹²¹ Father Raymond J. de Souza, "A religious Canada, strong and free," *The National Post*, February 23, 2013. <http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2013/02/21/father-raymond-j-de-souza-a-religious-canada-strong-and-free/>. Accessed March 2, 2013.

meanings of these often naturalized concepts remain undisclosed in this debate, and in the debates of international theory.

Chapter 3 – The Religious and the Secular in *A Secular Age*

“The great invention of the West was that of an imminent order in Nature, whose working could be systematically understood and explained on its own terms, leaving open the question whether this whole order had a deeper significance, and whether, if it did, we should infer a transcendent Creator beyond it.” - Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*¹

3.1 Argument and Structure of the Chapter

The argument of this chapter is that both rival versions of the religious and the secular underlying religious freedom debates in Canadian foreign policy – laïcité and Judeo-Christian secularism – are part of a larger transformation that Charles Taylor calls the modern social imaginary. This transformation is between what Taylor calls the pre-modern and the modern world, and a key part of that transformation is the shifting social construction of the religious and the secular. It is not merely that the religious and the secular are given different content in the modern social imaginary, but that two separate, discrete social and political spheres called the “religious” and the “secular” come into being at all. This is the major transformation of *A Secular Age*, the parceling of reality into separate religious and secular spheres, the separation of human politics and flourishing from a higher or transcendent will and order. The invention of the religious and the secular makes possible an “immanent order,” one whose interlocking meanings can be uncovered by independent human rationality, and therefore an order which may, or may not, have a transcendent intention or person behind it. This optionality, the meanings and invention of the religious and the secular, is a central feature of both laïcité and Judeo-Christian secularism; both are part of *A Secular Age*.

The argument first introduces Charles Taylor and his place in debates over multiculturalism and religious freedom in Canada. Taylor’s extensive work on secularity in Quebec, and elsewhere in Canada, his ranging political experience in the country, and his international reputation on secularity and political theory generally make him an excellent candidate for disclosing the Secular social imaginary underlying religious freedom in Canadian foreign affairs. His terms and experiences are native to the debate itself.

¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 15.

Second, the chapter summarizes the shift that Taylor means between the pre-modern and the modern world, the conditions for the invention of the religious and the secular, or what he calls the bulwarks of disbelief. This section both outlines the conditions for the new content of the modern social imaginary and puts this content in relief with pre-modern perspectives. He calls the first of these the buffered versus the porous self, or a new perspective on the self which is independent, able to make and unmake meanings, of reality. He contrasts this with the porous self, one in which meaning existed as given in reality apart from individual will or preference, and in which disbelief did not mean disengaging and making another choice, but opening oneself to radical cosmic powers that could, and did, penetrate both body and mind. This perspective on the person is central to a new concept of rationality as a disembodied centre of gravity for each person, which stands outside, disengaged, and capable of dispassionate control. Second, then, this transformation also takes place in the universe itself, making a new impersonal order, one in which order is not given or imposed, but something that human persons make together of their own rational interest. Political and social realities are radically changed from a hierarchical, organic order into a complementary, horizontal life, judged on its utility for human flourishing. Such a political and social order is always secondary to the person, since it is the will of persons, spontaneously self-interested, that puts such orders in place. Finally, and third, this means that God himself is transformed into a providential Deism, a creator whose first and final task is calling the interlocking meanings of this order into being. What is owed to God is the realization of this order of human flourishing through his endowed faculties of reason, until finally the concept of God becomes an option itself, replaced by whatever seems right or fashionable to a person. These bulwarks, argues Taylor, offer a profound shift in the social imagination of the West, which sustains newly formed concepts of religion and secularity, and which makes the modern social imaginary unique.

Third, the argument looks at the invention of the religious itself, something which other international theorists like Scott Thomas, Daniel Philpott, and Mariano Barbato have done at greater length.² Recently, Thomas and Barbato have cited the work of William Cavanaugh, arguing that “the myth of religious violence and religion as a separate concept from normal

² See especially Scott Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations*, “Living Critically and ‘Living Faithfully’ in a Global Age: Justice, Emancipation and the Political Theology of International Relations,” *Millennium* (2010 39:505), Daniel Philpott “The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations,” *World Politics* 52 (January 2000, 206-245), “The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations,” in *World Politics* 55 (October 2002, 66-95), and Mariano Barbato, Chiara de Franco and Brigitte Le Normand, “Is There a Specific Ambivalence of the Sacred? Illustrations from the Apparition of Medjugorje and the Movement of Sant’Egidio,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* (13:1, 53-73).

public life is an invention dating from the Early Modern Era when the emerging state was eager to weaken bonds of loyalty to religious community and clergy in order to concentrate them on the state building project.”³ Cavanaugh’s argument, a parallel to those emerging in international theory, is that *religio* was only sparsely used prior to the modern period, and that its wider usage came also with a new definition that would have been unintelligible to a millennia of western Christendom preceding it: an increasingly privatized, transcendent devotion, governed by the religious authorities and communities that also therefore grew increasingly politically marginal. In fact, Cavanaugh takes the argument one step further saying that the so-called Wars of Religion were actually about the transfer of power from the church to the state, and intrinsic to that transfer was the invention of a discrete, disempowered, privatized arena within which religion could persist, if under careful watch.⁴ Cavanaugh’s more radical claims are not the concern of this thesis, but that such an invention took place, that it was distinct from pre-modern understandings, and that it therefore fundamentally shapes the modern social imaginary certainly is central to the argument concerning rival versions of the religious and the secular in laïcité and Judeo-Christian secularism.

Fourth, the argument outlines Taylor’s account of the modern social imaginary, what kind of social and political imagination is grounded by the invention of the religious and the secular. He describes this imaginary using three social forms: the objectified economy, the public sphere, and the self-governing people. These forms are the result of this shift from a hierarchical universal, of given meaning, of social and political communities intrinsic to, rather than derivative of, human identity, and finally of an increasingly radical self-government in personhood and authority.

Fifth, Taylor also outlines the tensions that emerge from these social forms: individualism, instrumental reason, and a loss of freedom. He calls these tensions the “malaise of modernity,” and argues that these manifest themselves in modern, western political practice

³ Mariano Barbato, Chiara de Franco, and Brigitte Le Normand, “Is There a Specific Ambivalence of the Sacred? Illustrations from the Apparition of Medjugorje and the Movement of Sant’Egidio,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* (13:1, 53-73), 57. Scott Thomas served as a reader for William Cavanaugh’s *Myth of Religious Violence*, and is thanked for his input in the Acknowledgements. See William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Also, Cavanaugh’s response to Philpott, Toft, and Shah’s book, *God’s Century*: William T. Cavanaugh, “God’s Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* (2012, 12:3), 398-399.

⁴ Cavanaugh makes this argument more explicit in *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). The conclusion reflects at greater length on Cavanaugh’s more radical claims that cannot be treated in the main argument.

because the underlying beliefs and practices of the modern social imaginary are a pragmatic, not idealized balance.

Taken together, these social forms of the modern social imaginary and their “malaise” are what is called the marks of the modern social imaginary, marks that are intrinsic to laïcité and Judeo-Christian secularism, and further marks that must be accounted for if rival versions of the religious and the secular are to be made intelligible. This is important in western states like Canada to differentiate between rival versions of the religious and the secular, but even more so in political and social communities outside the western world, in which many are struggling to make – or not to make – the same concessions to the religious and the secular.

3.2 Charles Taylor’s *Secular Age*

Charles Taylor is one of the most celebrated political theorists of the contemporary academy. His work on secularism, modernity, and pluralism are standards in any discussion of the nature, orientation, and foundations of political theory and practice.⁵ *A Secular Age* (2007) continues to be the subject of significant debate across disciplines, including politics, sociology, and theology. Although his work has made slower inroads into international relations itself, his work is often the background to conversations on secularity.⁶

Taylor writes out of both extensive intellectual experience, but also significant political experience, in the province of Quebec, Canada. Since the Quiet Revolution, Quebec has been Canada’s most aggressively secular province. Yet despite its populist naming, the Quiet Revolution was anything but quiescent. During that time Quebec was host to some of

⁵ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Harvard: Belknap University Press, 1992). – *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto: Anansi Press Ltd, 2004) – *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) – *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004). – *A Secular Age* (Harvard: Belknap Press, 2007).

⁶ Elizabeth Shakman Hurd cites Taylor as one of three influences on her work on secularism in international relations. Nicholas Rengger assigns Taylor on the modern social imaginary, in particular, in his graduate seminar on political philosophy and world order. See most recently the addition of his argument on the meaning of secularism in Dennis R. Hoover and Douglas M. Johnston, eds. *Religion and Foreign Affairs: Essential Readings* (Baylor: Baylor University Press, 2012). See also John H.A. Dyck, Paul S. Rowe, Jens Zimmerman (eds), *Politics and the Religious Imagination* (Routledge, 2010), especially Section Three: The Religious Imagination in Global Politics and its Conclusion, by Paul Rowe, Jens Zimmerman, and John Dyck.

Canada's few acts of political violence and terrorism in the FLQ⁷ crisis, during which British Trade Commissioner James Cross was kidnapped and Quebec Labour Minister Pierre Laporte was murdered by strangulation. Recently, Quebec has suffered serious demographic and economic reversals, fomenting a mentality of cultural besiegement and discontent among Francophone proponents. Despite this, the separatist movement – alive and well two decades ago – is mostly dead.⁸ Taylor's academic work is therefore grounded in the very specific and practical problems of identity politics, and religious and multicultural freedom. He has run for federal political office four times with the New Democratic Party, losing each time, but most famously to Canada's future Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1965. He was also author, with Gérard Bouchard, of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission on Reasonable Accommodation with regard to cultural differences in the province of Quebec in 2007.

All of this is Taylor's backdrop as he wrestles with questions of secularity and the invention of religion. Interestingly, for a political theorist living in a country where *laïcité* continues to command significant political power, Taylor takes as disproven the perspective that secularism means a resolution to these questions which is free from religion, or purely *laïque*. He caricatures this position as that of the radical Jacobins and earlier Rawls. In fact, Taylor takes it as now understood that there is no such timeless rationality by which political principles can be determined and that situations vary too widely for any kind of consistent, concrete realization of general principles. He argues that to dictate such principles from a higher neutrality would rob certain spiritual families of a voice and present difficulties and conflicts among basic goals.⁹ Taylor probably dismisses this problem too easily, even if philosophically he may be right, because clearly these ideas still command power in his native Canada.

The central insight of Taylor's *A Secular Age* is that the transformations in the modern moral order are not neutral, that they are often under-theorized, misunderstood, or simply assumed, and that fundamental to that transformation is the invention of religion and secularity.

⁷ Front de libération du Québec, a Quebec separatist and Marxist-Leninist paramilitary group in Quebec, active between 1963-1970. It was responsible for 160 violent incidents, killing eight people, injuring more, including the bombing of the Montreal Stock Exchange in 1969.

⁸ Despite the election of proclaimed sovereigntist Premier Pauline Marois in September 2012, her minority government seems in little danger of resurrecting the sovereignty movement. The 1995 referendum in Quebec defeated the separatist cause by an extremely narrow margin of 50.6% to 49.4%, but there has not been a referendum or serious political effort for one since the defeat in 1995.

⁹ Charles Taylor, "Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism" in Mendieta, Eduardo and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (eds.), *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 35.

3.3 The Bulwarks of Disbelief

Charles Taylor writes,

The coming of modern secularity . . . has been coterminous with the rise of a society in which for the first time in history a purely self-sufficient humanism came to be a widely available option. I mean by this a humanism accepting no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing. Of no previous society was this true.¹⁰

This is one of Taylor's most striking claims: that the modern social imaginary provides a means by which to conceive of social and political activities that are distinct from questions of transcendent or cosmic purpose, questions more often considered in the modern sense the purview of theologians or philosophers. A Secular age, he argues, is "one in which the eclipse of all goals beyond human flourishing becomes conceivable; or better, it falls with the range of an imaginable life for masses of people."¹¹ He points to several key revolutions of the modern imagination, of how human beings, the world and the gods/God are constituted that make the invention of religion, as a discrete separable phenomenon, possible. Taylor calls these the conditions of secularity, and the rise of "religion."

3.3.1 The Buffered versus the Porous Self

Taylor says that secularism is often thought of as a "subtraction" story:¹² that as more naturalistic explanations of the world became available, society became disenchanted, removing prior spiritualistic reasoning, and replacing it with secular rationality. The awakened consciousness of individuals worked, over time, to remove spiritualistic and superstitious rationale from society itself. First, the subtraction story goes, human beings uncovered scientific explanations, then they began looking for alternatives to God.

But Taylor argues that scientific inquiry did not automatically invalidate transcendent images of the cosmos. Scientific inquiry may have been a problem for an enchanted universe, one of

¹⁰ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 18.

¹¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 19-20.

¹² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 26-27.

magical and spiritual power latent in material reality, but it was not necessarily a problem for God. While rebelling against certain forms of enchantment was made possible, characteristically the Church in the form of the Reformation, this did not necessarily invalidate a divine, cosmic hierarchy.¹³ None of these things themselves demand either social or individual atomisation or secularity. Therefore what Taylor considers crucial for this revolution was not only the disenchantment of scientific inquiry, but also a new sense of self. He writes that this “was a new sense of the self and its place in the cosmos: not open and porous and vulnerable to a world of spirits and powers, but what I want to call ‘buffered.’”¹⁴ This was more than disenchantment. This was a new confidence in the human power of moral ordering.

Taylor contrasts this to the time prior to the Reformation and the Enlightenment, what he calls pre-modern, during which human persons were imagined as porous. The porous self of pre-modern era had existential options, but they were largely between placating different kinds of powers, not of standing apart from or against them. There did exist non-theistic cosmic orders, but this is not the same thing as the modern Secular. Platonism or Stoicism, for instance, have little room for magic and spirits, but they were not disenchanted orders, nor were they exclusive humanisms. A grand cosmic hierarchy still ordered the universe, which had its own *internal* meanings. Even in the Platonic and Stoic world, the line between personal agency and impersonal force was blurry at best. The pre-modern world was filled with such forces, whether the Forms or demons, relics or Satan. A complex hierarchy of invisible forces competed to bring either good or ill. Some powers, like those of the gods and goddesses of Olympia, could even conjure human love, hate, or war. The cosmos itself conspired to compromise what is now called human agency and responsibility. It was an enchanted world, which showed “a perplexing absence of certain boundaries which seem to us essential.”¹⁵

In the pre-modern world, meanings were not exclusively created by humans; they were uncovered. Meaning already existed latent in the cosmos, and resided in things themselves. Agency was not just the privilege of human persons, but of a whole range of things. These had the power to impose meaning on humans, which was independent of their observation.

¹³ Jim Payton, *Getting the Reformation Wrong: Correcting some Misunderstandings* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010). Payton argues in fact that the Reformation was understood by its leaders – including Luther and Calvin – to be an internal correction of abusive and heretical teachings of the Church and the Papacy, not a revolution, and certainly not a political or secularizing effort.

¹⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 27.

¹⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 33.

Humans were not only possibly but consistently penetrated by these objects. Evil spirits, for example, were more than simply malevolent powers that could affect externalities. They were more invasive. Spirits could sap the very will to live, penetrate humans as living, willing beings, transforming purpose and intent. This is the porous self. It is radically open to the meanings and enchantment of the cosmos around it. In the enchanted world, the most powerful location of meaning is external to the self. The very idea that there is some “clear boundary, allowing us to define an inner base area, grounded in which we can disengage from the rest, has no sense.”¹⁶

By contrast, the buffered self is external to these realities. The inner self is invulnerable, a master of meaning. It is “essentially the self which is aware of the possibility of disengagement.”¹⁷ Disengaging from what is “outside” means that ultimate purpose is only that which arises from within the self. And so the meanings of things are only defined by our response to them. These purposes may well be manipulated in a variety of ways, but in principle these can be met with counter-manipulation and resistance. The emphasis then is on keeping a rational and measured interior life, one which can avoid or dissect and respond with the appropriate meaning to externalities of distress or temptation.¹⁸

A pre-modern, porous self made disbelief remarkably hard. Disbelief in, for example, God did not mean a rational retreat to the buffered self to consider what other existential options might seem practical, but a radical autonomy in the face of powerful, invisible, and penetrating forces. This was a dangerous option for the porous self. It is not to say it was never done, it’s simply to argue it was unlikely to happen on a mass scale. Further, it suggests why if one brave individual did break rank with collective devotions or rituals, the response was often violent and decisive. Blasphemy and desecration activated forces well beyond the control of a porous, hierarchically bound self. Disbelief threatened not simply the person and their salvation, but the entire community. The porous self demands, “venger à toute rigueur afin de faire cesser l’ire de Dieu”¹⁹ (exact rigorous vengeance in order to stay the anger of God).

¹⁶ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* 38.

¹⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 42.

¹⁸ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 37-38.

¹⁹ As quoted in Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 43.

In general, the modern self relates to the world as “more disembodied beings than our ancestors. The person stands outside, in the agent of disengaged discipline, capable of dispassionate control.”²⁰

3.3.2 The Great Disembedding

The second key is what Taylor calls the impersonal order, a revolution in imagination from a porous “cosmos” to a buffered “universe.” Once disembedded, social order is not an imposition or a form societies enact better or worse, but a “game we play together.”²¹ Its order is increasingly rational and, therefore, assumed stable. Gone are the ambiguities of complementarity in the pre-modern world, between king and peasant, monk and parishioner. The new order is coherent, horizontal, and a whole. “Disenchantment brought a new uniformity of purpose and principle.”²²

The impersonal order has a buffered self as prerequisite. A porous society insists on hierarchical mediations, but a society of discrete, rational individuals might, in a providential order, build a common life for mutual flourishing. And it is this emphasis on the individual which provides an important backdrop for what comes to be called religion.

Religion, or at least the early experience of what is retrospectively call religion, was an embedded activity. Taylor means “embedded” in at least several important social ways.

First, in pre-modern times, religious life was inseparably linked to social life. This was not particular to religious life. It would also be difficult to dissect political obligations from social obligations. The ways of living religion were strikingly different from the modern world. Porous experiences had profound impacts on societies; portentous dreams, for example, or divine signs, possessions, or cures. All were common experiences embedded in everyday life that might be called religious.

Second, religion was social in that the primary agency of its activity—for example praying, sacrificing, healing, protecting, and more—was the social group as a whole, or some

²⁰ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 141.

²¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 142.

²² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 146.

mediator standing vicariously for the group. In early religion, writes Taylor, “we primarily relate to God as a society.”²³ Powerful invocations are not idiosyncratically communal, they are necessarily so. It is a practice not of one or another individual, or even of a collection of individuals, but of a cohesive whole calling on powers of protection, of life, and of sustenance.

Third, therefore, the social order itself was sacrosanct. Functionaries, shamans, priests, chiefs, and so on, were conscripted to perform important religious actions on behalf of the community. It was not that all pre-modern cultures were theocracies, in the modern understanding, it was that they existed in an embedded hierarchy with congruent beliefs about the cosmos.

Fourth, if all important action is the doing of whole groups, then there is less conception of self apart from that society. Not only order, but meaning slips away until what is left is either barbarism or divinity.²⁴ Taylor likens this kind of deep social embeddedness to how the modern imaginary might think of gender. What would it be like if you, as a man, were born a woman, or as a woman, a man? To even ask this question is getting “too deep into the very formative horizon of my identity to be able to make sense of the question.”²⁵ Not only does it not often occur to us to ask, but we have very little to offer of ourselves apart from it.

So this embeddedness makes it unlikely for a person to imagine themselves outside a certain social context. And not only, of course, in a society, but in a whole cosmos of which the society is itself hierarchically situated. Taylor writes, “Human agents are embedded in society, society in the cosmos, and the cosmos incorporates the divine.”²⁶ So to talk about “religion” in any kind of retrospective sense may border on anachronism, as deciphering what elements exactly constitute religious versus, say, political or economic motivations begin to prove very difficult. The religious does not have an obviously discrete meaning in the pre-modern world apart from its embedded form in everyday life.

What can be said about this pre-modern picture is that the buffered identity contributes to what is essentially a great disembedding. Embeddedness is both a matter of identity: the contextual imagination of the self – and of the social imaginary: the ways we are able to think

²³ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 148.

²⁴ Recall Aristotle’s famous phrasing in the *Politics* that “outside the polis man is either beast or god.”

²⁵ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 149.

²⁶ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 152.

of or imagine society.²⁷ But a buffered self with its emphasis on personal discipline, of distance and even hostility to collective forms, rejects much of this. Society comes to be understood as an impersonal order, a mutual project of consent and exchange constituted and authorized by individuals. This is a major revolution in the way persons come to understand not only their social lives, but also the contents and practices of their sacred lives. This disembeds human beings from the social sacred, and posits a new relation to God, as designer rather than immanent sustainer, of architect, rather than incarnate. This designation, of course, is more or less dispensable, separating God further and further from the design and sustenance of a sacred order, until his task becomes little more than setting the pieces of the great clockwork of human civilization in order. In such an order, it is probably only a matter of time until some other force may simply takes God's place striking the clock.

3.3.3 Providential Deism

So the idea grew that human relation to God was primarily by relating to the order of things, whose moral shape can be reasonably discerned if one is not misled by superstitious or ideological notions. Following God can be done by following the patterns of things he has laid out. A rational God is the architect of a rational world, endowing his creatures with the characteristics necessary to activate the latent laws designed into its fabric. And so Deism is a kind of "natural" religion, belief that spontaneously arises when the corruptions of the superstitious mind are removed. It is available, in principle, to every human, which makes it fundamentally equal.

God's own goals settle into a kind of anthropocentrism: a single end which encompasses mostly human flourishing and mutual benefit within his designed order.²⁸ This is not necessarily new to the Judeo-Christian tradition, but it was always thought that in addition to this divine providence God also had greater purposes for creation, presumably love and worship of him. Therein lies a demand which supersedes human flourishing. In the modern social imaginary this demand can remain, but only if it is experienced and acted upon

²⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 156.

²⁸ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 221.

privately. To act on such a higher command publicly or politically would be to risk instability, and the possible repression of human flourishing.

The eclipse of any greater good than human flourishing is what Taylor calls the anthropocentric shift.²⁹ The first shift is the idea that people owe God nothing further than the realization of his providential plan. That is, what is owed God is essentially the achievement of our own good. Transcendence is less central to faith, but rather self-realization and mutual aid.

Second, the buffered self and the disembedded order also eclipse grace. The *original* grace, God's endowment of human creatures with rational faculties, is sufficient to achieve human good. Humans self-order, self-actualize, and self-discipline. An active, sustaining grace is, however, unnecessary. There is only the first grace: a God who makes and endows human beings with reason with which to carry out his final plan. And in case people prove unfaithful or ungrateful, God stands at the end of history to judge with joy or punishment comparative competence with those faculties.

Third, the sense of mystery fades with the disenchantment of the world. Taylor writes, "If God's purposes for us encompasses only our own good, and this can be read from the design of our nature, then no further mystery can hide there."³⁰ There is discovery, certainly, but the tools and means of that discovery are already internal to people. The disciplined human heart is not mysterious, it is competent. God's providence is also emptied of mystery. His particular providences, specifically, are all but absent. Miracles do not erupt in a stable, impersonal order. Such an activity by a rational God would, in fact, seem inherently irrational and irresponsible. Indeed, the very claim that "God speaks" is seriously suspect. The idea, argues Taylor, "is scarcely conceivable that the Author of such an order would stoop to such personalized communication as a short cut, if virtuous reason alone can suffice to tell us all we need to know."³¹ Such a claim has indeed become a serious clash in contemporary philosophical and theological conversations.³²

Fourth and finally, the idea began to erode that God was planning a transformation of human beings, which would take them beyond the limitations of their present condition. The

²⁹ See "Providential Deism" in *A Secular Age*, 221-269.

³⁰ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 223.

³¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 292.

³² For further reflection on this, Nicholas Wolterstorff writes at length on this problem in *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

narrowing of the Christian Gospel, one which barely invokes the saving action of Christ, had little time for devotion and prayer. It turned more on God as creator and designer, producing a tandem emphasis on the things of this world and their horizontal sacredness, than on a restorative afterlife. Such an afterlife would seem to produce human beings much the same as they are now, eliminating some of the more painful and awkward externalities. For if what is human is what is internal and rational, then humans do not so much transform as simply evolve. Religion in this picture is a private discipline, a moral code of conduct which cultivates an ordered, rational interior life. It self-actualizes more than it transfigures, introspects more than contemplates, it counsels rather than repents.

Taylor's argument is that from these shifts religion emerges as distinct from society and internal to the individual, and that this condition is surprisingly widely shared. Religion is part of the bulwark of social flourishing only insofar as it can, in a utilitarian sense, contribute to that final end. But if religion is private and instrumental, it becomes confusing what legacy pre-modern saints like Saint Francis might have. Taylor writes,

If God's purpose for us really is simply that we flourish, and we flourish by judicious use of industry and instrumental reason, then what possible use could he have for a Saint Francis, who in a great élan of love calls on his followers to dedicate themselves to a life of poverty? At best, this must lower GNP, by withdrawing these mendicants from the workforce; but worse, it can lower the morale of the productive. Better to accept the limitations of our nature as self-loving creatures, and make the best of it.³³

This is the emergence of a new kind of social imaginary, one in which the religious and the secular are invented to serve new political and social orders, and one in which the assumptions of self and the world are markedly different than those of pre-modern history.

3.4 The Invention of Religion

Religio, the Latin root of religion, had only modest use until it was given new social meaning in the modern era. As Taylor argues, it was not used in a compartmentalized sense in pre-modern times. How, for example, to think of religion as distinct from other institutions? Could it be said that imperial Rome was religious? Does it matter that the Emperor and conqueror Julius Caesar was also for a time supreme Pontiff of Rome, a religious office – to

³³ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 230.

the modern observer – that was essentially in perfect congruity with the political conquests and triumphs of Rome?³⁴ Were Rome’s wars religious or political? The question is very hard to answer one way or the other.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s 1962 book *The Meaning and End of Religion* made one of the first arguments about “the religious problem” at greater length. Simply put, he said, politics as a category of human life independent of religion is a modern thought.³⁵ Political theorist Quentin Skinner says that the idea of politics as a distinct branch of moral philosophy is impossible in a medieval context underwritten by Augustine’s *City of God*.³⁶

The religious problem, argues Smith, is assuming that *religio* means through all time what it came to be defined as in the modern period. But *religio* in the Latin was only one of a whole variety of terms surrounding social obligations in the pre-modern world, and it certainly did not mean mere transcendent impulses or codes of belief. It included cultic observances, but also civic oaths and family rituals³⁷ that the modern mind might take at face value as secular.

In early Christianity, *religio* was still a relatively minor concept. The term appears, though somewhat sparsely, in translations of the New Testament.³⁸ Various patristic writers used the term, though with different meanings, including rituals for clerical office, worship liturgies, and piety or a worshipful disposition.³⁹ Augustine meant by *religio* the act of worship. In book X of *City of God* he clarifies its use,

The word “religion” would seem, to be sure, to signify more particularly the “cult” offered to God, rather than “cult” in general; and that is why our translators have used it to render the Greek word *thrêskeia*. However, in Latin usage (and by that I do not mean in the speech of the illiterate, but even in the language of the highly educated) “religion” is something which is displayed in human relationships, in the family (in the narrower and the wider sense) and between friends; and so the use of the word does not avoid ambiguity when the worship of God is in question. We have no right to affirm with confidence that “religion” is confined to the worship of God, since it

³⁴ The Pontifex Maximum in Rome is an excellent example of the commingling of political and religious authority. It was not a theocracy in the current understanding, simply a continuity of cosmic authority in an imperial mediator.

³⁵ Wilfrid Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 18-19.

³⁶ Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 2:349-350.

³⁷ William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 62.

³⁸ Including six times as a Latin translation for several Greek terms in St. Jerome’s Vulgate New Testament. In the King James Version of the New Testament the term religion appears only five times, for three different Greek words (William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 62).

³⁹ Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 62.

seems that this word has been detached from its normal meaning, in which it refers to an attitude of respect in relations between man and his neighbour.⁴⁰

Augustine finds the separation of obligations of family and society from the beliefs and practices of religion incomprehensible. All these devotions are bound together in a complex web of relationships. For Augustine, right ordering of social relationships includes worship of God. But that ordering of obligations, of what Augustinian philosopher David Naugle calls “ordered loves,”⁴¹ is not distinguished between secular and religious obligations. All of life is ordered toward the worship of God, all of life embedded in a hierarchical cosmos.

Religio is actually less common in the medieval period. Wilfred Cantwell Smith says that although “it is nowadays customary to think of this period as the most ‘religious’ in the history of Christendom . . . throughout the whole Middle Ages no one, so far as I have been able to ascertain, ever wrote a book specifically on ‘religion.’ And on the whole this concept would seem to have received little attention.”⁴² John Bossy argues that the ancient meaning of *religio* as duty or reverence disappeared in the medieval period.⁴³ In England by around 1400, religion was taken to mean entering various orders, Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, and so forth.⁴⁴

Aquinas did use the word, primarily to defend religious orders, but also in the older sense in the *Summa Theologiae* where he lists *religio* as a virtue of justice. Theologian William Cavanaugh summarizes from Aquinas four important qualifications about what *religio* was *not* for medieval Christendom.⁴⁵

First, “*religio* is not a universal genus of which Christianity is a particular species.”⁴⁶ *Religio* is only true *religio* in the sense that it has an ordered worship of the Christian God at its source. Aquinas would not, for example, acknowledge a common essence of *religio* underlying various world religions.

Second, *religio* was not a series of a propositions or a system of beliefs. Cavanaugh writes, “Christian *religio* is not a system of propositions about reality. It is a *virtue* . . . Christian

⁴⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1972), X:I (373).

⁴¹ David K. Naugle, *Reordered Love, Reordered Lives: Learning the Deep Meaning of Happiness* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008).

⁴² Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 32.

⁴³ John Bossy, “Some Elementary Forms of Durkheim,” *Past and Present* 95 (1982), 4.

⁴⁴ William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 64.

⁴⁵ This argument can be found in longer form in William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 64-69.

⁴⁶ William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 65.

religio is a type of *habitus*, a disposition of the person toward moral excellence produced by highly specific disciplines of *body and soul*.⁴⁷ *Religio* is not a cerebral exercise of propositions or doctrines, but a practice of embodied formation. This is why Saba Mahmood outlines in *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* that nonmodern rituals often have a more marked emphasis on bodily habits and sensory rituals. The porous self can be effectively formed by externalities, whereas the buffered self finds such activities only so much ornamentation. Saba Mahmood argues, for example, that the Muslim veil is often misunderstood as simply an identifying religious symbol, when actually it is itself a religious practice of modesty, by whose adoption people *become* more modest. Iterative gestures eventually become postures, not altogether unlike what Aristotle argued in his *Ethics*.⁴⁸

Third, *religio* is not a purely individual and interior impulse. For Aquinas, *religio* is a virtue, and virtue is a type of habit, and habits are caused by the repetition of acts.⁴⁹ If the soul and the body are one psychosomatic unit, with the soul or the consciousness as no separate thing, then the acts of *religio* are surprisingly *physical* to the modern observer. Hugh of St. Victor writes, for example:

It is discipline imposed on the body which forms virtue. Body and spirit are but one: disordered movements of the former betray outwardly the disarranged interior of the soul. But inversely, “discipline” can act on the soul through the body – in ways of dressing, in posture and movement, in speech and in table manners.⁵⁰

Therefore, fourth, *religio* is also not an institutional force discrete from other secular forces. As Cavanaugh argues, the claim that religious institutions are responsible, for example, for certain acts of violence or benevolence, is difficult to sustain in pre-modern history. Institutional religion opposed to what? When pundits and populists reach back into antiquity to pull, for example, religious impulses out of the Crusades, or the early aggressive expansions of Islam, in what sense is the “religion” that they are talking about comprehensibly distinct in those contexts? Were the Crusades religious, or economic, or political? The point is not that the real motivations were not religious. The point is that

⁴⁷ William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 66. Emphasis added. See for a fuller argument Aquinas’s treatise on habits and virtues in *Summa Theologiae*, I-II.49-70. The bodily aspect of *religio* is a point made at length by Saba Mahmood in *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁴⁸ Mahmood describes her approach in *Politics of Piety* as a combination of Foucault and Aristotle.

⁴⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II.52.2-3.

⁵⁰ As quoted in Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 138.

dissecting motivations of this nature, or categorizing institutions in this fashion, using retrospective categories whose meanings have profoundly shifted yields historical anachronism at best, falsity at worst. *Religio* in the pre-modern world was not a separate sphere of concern, but its obligations permeated all spheres of life. *Religio* was not separable – even in theory – from the political activities of Christendom.⁵¹ It was, as Aquinas says, that “every deed, in so far as it is done in God’s honour, belongs to religion, not as eliciting, but as commanding.”⁵² Cavanaugh writes, “Medieval Christendom was a theopolitical whole.”⁵³ The religious problem, argues Cavanaugh, is not just “that all phenomenon identified as religious are historical specific” but rather that “the definitions themselves are historical products that are part of specific configurations of power.”⁵⁴

After Aquinas, but still prior to the Reformation, Cavanaugh identifies two Christian Platonists whose work began to popularize modern understandings of religion: Nicholas of Cusa and Marsilio Ficino. What Cusa introduced was a use of *religio* that was divorced from ritual or social practice. He argued *religio* was a universal and interior impulse that stood behind and apart from the rites themselves;⁵⁵ it is the wisdom that underlies those rites that he was concerned with. Its manifestations were not incidental, but they were separable. Ficino’s work, on the other hand, took *religio* to mean something like piety. He argued it was a “natural, innate impulse of the human heart” that was the fundamental characteristic common to all humanity.⁵⁶ *Religio* is again understood as distinct from its externalities. This initial break between belief and practice, between the internal-external duality of *religio*, was crucial for the invention of the religious-secular divide of later centuries.

The Reformation itself had a famous impact on the conception of authority and self. Peter Harrison argues that in Calvinism in particular this transition from a life of communal ritual to individual belief – the state of the mind – was obvious.⁵⁷ John Calvin, of course, used the term *religio* in a medieval sense but his followers quickly embraced a more cerebral pietism, emphasizing *saving knowledge* principally through doctrines such as predestination and election. Saving knowledge was not necessarily only doctrinal facts, so much as assurance of

⁵¹ William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 68.

⁵² Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II.81.4 ad 2.

⁵³ William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 68.

⁵⁴ William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 69.

⁵⁵ William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 70.

⁵⁶ As quoted in William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 71.

⁵⁷ Peter Harrison, *Religion and the Religions of the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

God's will in life. Harrison traces this to Calvin's rejection of the Catholic doctrine of "implicit faith," which is the idea that less-educated Christians did not need to understand doctrines like the Trinity, but merely have faith in the traditions and ministers of the Church.⁵⁸ However, Calvin's rejection of this communitarian soteriology was almost certainly inspired by his rejection of what Protestants, and many others, considered the corrupted state of the Catholic hierarchy. Nonetheless, the deconstruction of ecclesial hierarchy meant a more personalized, possessed faith, rather than something that is given, or received.

The Arminian controversy that followed was essentially a theological extension of Taylor's porous versus buffered self. Sensitive that Calvin's teachings on the sovereignty of God undermined human agency, Jacobius Arminius proposed a condition whereby human agents made a choice to believe, thereby ensuring intellectual assent as the cornerstone of the Christian faith. It was not the same as the moralism or the works righteousness that the Reformation reacted to, but it did tend to reduce *religio* further to a series of important truths that were agreed upon.⁵⁹ So when Hugo Grotius, Arminius's patron, wrote *De Veritate Religionis Christianae*, his task was to show that Christianity was the true religion, meaning that its doctrines were "facts."⁶⁰ He argued for the superiority of what Christianity taught.⁶¹

The separation of *religio* and the secular was already therefore taking place when in the sixteenth century Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, one of the most important modern theorists of religion, proposed a consensus on the five essential beliefs of all religions. They were:⁶²

That there is some supreme divinity;
That this divinity ought to be worshipped;
That virtue joined with piety is the best method of divine worship;
That we should return to our right selves from sins;
That reward or punishment is bestowed after this life is finished.

He takes these common truths to proceed directly from innate instincts that are natural to the human condition. So rather than take traditions and their claims on their own terms, the rational mind makes its best decisions when unaffected, or unclouded, by tradition. Religion

⁵⁸ Harrison, "Religion" and Religions, 19-23.

⁵⁹ Harrison, "Religion" and Religions, 23-24.

⁶⁰ William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 73.

⁶¹ Smith, *Meaning and End*, 39.

⁶² Lord Herbert of Cherbury, *De Religione Laici*, trans. And ed. Harold R. Hutcheson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1944), 129.

is best private because a decision on religious matters coloured by hierarchy or externalities could produce an irrational result, or at least the results may not be true to the self. Writes Cavanaugh, “This sharp distinction between inward and outward would be unrecognizable in medieval Christendom, where the state of the interior soul was inseparable from the bodily disciplines and rituals that both formed and expressed the dispositions of the soul.”⁶³

Notice, for example, John Locke’s distinctions of the church as “a voluntary society of men” versus the state, to which one owes obedience from birth.⁶⁴ The state, argues Cavanaugh, is the *new covenant* one is born into, defining the individual’s social and political obligations. Such an account suggests that not only does religion have a story of its invention, but its invention is concomitant with the secular, and the constellations of state power.

All of this should simply demonstrate that there was a time when the religious and the secular meant very different things prior to the modern social imaginary. The idea that the religious and the secular must be distinguished, in the case of *laïcité* as removed from one another, in the case of Judeo-Christian secularism as one producing the other, is unique. This produced, as Cavanaugh argues, and Taylor provides at greater length, not only new experiences of the religious, but also a whole new way to imagine the social and the political, and its loyalties.

3.5 The Secular Age and the Modern Social Imaginary

In *A Secular Age*, Taylor argues that important light can be shed on “both the original and the contemporary issues about modernity if we can come to a clearer definition of the self-understandings that have been constitutive of it.”⁶⁵ He argues that the West is inseparable from this kind of social imaginary.

What Taylor calls the Grotian-Lockian consensus⁶⁶ is the first theoretical articulation for what he claims slowly trickles into the imaginary of modern politics. This image is of a

⁶³ William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 78-79.

⁶⁴ John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merill, 1955), 16-20.

⁶⁵ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 1.

⁶⁶ Charles Taylor’s reading of medieval and early modern thinkers has been criticized by a variety of thinkers, many of whom find his articulations incomplete and at times in error. An example here would be Oliver O’Donovan’s counter reading on Hugo Grotius. O’Donovan argues that far from embedding a new horizontal authority of rights and justice, Grotius articulates a hierarchal and religious, and thus fundamentally non-modern, reading of rights and justice. O’Donovan, “The Justice of Assignment and Subjective Rights in

society “of individuals who come together to form a political entity against a certain pre-existing moral background and with certain ends in view.” It is one of natural rights, of people who “already have certain moral obligations toward each other. The ends sought are certain common benefits, of which security is the most important.”⁶⁷

Over time this argument for pre-political priority became a justification for revolution and grounds for limited government. Rather than a naturalized hierarchy, the language and imagination of government was grounded on pre-political contracts that authorized particular concepts of legitimate authority. Political communities became not organic families of loyalty and identity, bound together by common beliefs and practices, but facilitators of individuals and their desires. This imaginary is predicated on “a feature about us *humans*, rather than one touching God or the cosmos, and not in the supposed absence altogether of an ontic dimension.”⁶⁸

This shift is from a pre-modern social imaginary, one that is hierarchical, complementarian and organic, to one that is horizontal, instrumental, and contractarian. Taylor argues that, for example, where for Plato the Forms were at work in reality, in the modern idealization social reality is what we fashion of it. The key protagonist changed from the pre-modern to the modern: not gods or God, or Nature or even the Universe, but the self-authorized human being. So the basic principles of political society shifted. Members of society “serve each other’s needs, help each other, in short, behave like the rational and sociable creatures that they are.”⁶⁹ But there is no intrinsic hierarchy here and no particular worth assigned to social differentiations within this complementary imagination. Hierarchies may exist, but they can be made and unmade by the same authorized persons that brought them into being. The picture is one of “mutual respect and mutual service of the individuals who make up society.”⁷⁰ A horizontal political society comes into being as an instrument of pre-political, equal, persons.

This complementary order, says Taylor, is not judged on some inherent form, but rather instrumentally. Taylor writes that “Our primary service to each other was thus . . . the provision of collective security, to render our lives and property safe under the law. But we

Grotius” in Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan, *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics, Past and Present* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2004), 167-203.

⁶⁷ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 3-4.

⁶⁸ Emphasis added. Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 11.

⁶⁹ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 12.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

also serve each other in practicing economic exchange. These two main ends, security and prosperity, are now the principal goals of organized society.”⁷¹ The image is one of profitable exchange between equal members.

In contrast, writes Taylor, “to the theories of hierarchical complementarity, we meet in a zone of concord and mutual service, not to the extent that we transcend our ordinary goals and purposes, but, on the contrary, in the process of carrying them out according to God’s design.”⁷²

The depth of what Taylor means by this transformation to the modern social imaginary should start to be clear. It is not simply theory, though it does incorporate that. It is, rather, the way “people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.”⁷³ He writes, “Humans operated with a social imaginary well before they ever got into the business of theorizing about themselves.”⁷⁴ And this is to restate the religious problem with religious freedom: not that rival versions of the religious and the secular cannot be theorized, as Taylor himself and this thesis do, but that these rival meanings are often undisclosed because they are parcel to an interlocking series of assumptions about reality. Taylor calls these assumptions in the West the modern social imaginary.

3.5.1 The Economy and Objectified Reality

What Taylor calls the objectification or economization of reality is a new way of understanding the world as separate, buffered, from persons. He calls this objectified and economized because it sustains a material reality that is external to persons, and so exploitable and consumable. Reality itself is made to serve people, rather than the reverse.

The idea of an ordered reality or society, ordained by God, is not particularly new. Various manifestations of divine providence of one kind or another can be traced back well before the

⁷¹ Ibid, 13-14.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid, 23.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 26.

Christian era into antiquity. What is new about this providence, and about this order, is its benevolent scheme. It is a scheme that is not only about fitting humanity into an organic whole, but fitting the reality to meet human needs and desires. It is anthropocentric.

A reality providentially ordered for human beings, coupled with the gift of reason, is what sustains modern ideas about spontaneous natural orders emerging from mutual benefit and self-interest, most famously the economic notion of the “invisible hand.” Taylor writes that, “The order emerging here is that of a good engineering design, in which efficient causation plays the crucial role.”⁷⁵ God is transformed into the great architect, the blueprints of which are freely available via natural reason.

The remarkable thing is that human purposes can, and indeed must, coincide. They involve an exchange of advantages. “God’s design is one of interlocking causes, not of harmonized meanings.”⁷⁶ But notice that this is not simply a political or economic statement, it also encompasses some of what could be called religious. The “sanctification of ordinary life,” as Taylor calls it, is tremendously formative for Western civilization. The equality of human persons and the subversion of vocational hierarchy (such as priests and nobles) is a consistent anti-elitism. Those allegedly higher vocations, whether sustained by Church teaching or secular philosophy, are undone.

This anti-elitism underwrites the importance of equality, affirming ordinary life is part of the central place given in economic life, and also that of family life and everyday relationships. And as this affirmation takes hold, commerce, economy, and family – the ordinary life – become the markers of civilization. Moneymaking is a “calm passion” and when it “takes hold in a society it can help to control and inhibit the violent passions.”⁷⁷

What this produces is a harmony of *interests*. Taylor writes, “It even came to be projected into the universe, for it is this that is reflected in the eighteenth-century vision of cosmic order, not as hierarchy of forms-at-work, but as a chain of beings whose purposes mesh with each other. Things cohere because they serve each other in their survival and flourishing.”⁷⁸ Thus is formed the ideal economy. This, then, is **the shift in economy: that of humans coming “to see our society as an economy, an interlocking set of activities of production,**

⁷⁵ Ibid, 70.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 71.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 74.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 75.

exchange and consumption, which form a system with its own laws and its own dynamic.”⁷⁹

Spontaneous order emerging from self-interested agents might suggest, at a certain point, the compromise of the self-governing people. Monopolistic economic life, for example, may come to undermine the choices of the people. Taylor agrees that this is a seeming contradiction at the heart of the modern social imaginary. He writes,

Once we are no longer dealing with an idea of social order as Forms-at-work in reality, of the kind involved by Plato, but as forms imposed on inert reality by human agency, we need pictures of the layout of this inert reality and the causal connections that structure it, just as much as we need models of our collective action on it. The engineer needs to know the laws of the domain in which he is going to work, just as much as he needs a plan of what he is trying to achieve; indeed, the second can't be drawn up unless the first is known.⁸⁰

Taylor calls the new form of science that emerges from objectifying reality “ineradicably bifocal,”⁸¹ by which he simply means the subject/object relationship that is intrinsic to much of modern science.

3.5.2 The Public Sphere

The economization of reality also has political consequences. If material reality is inert, and its meanings are made by buffered individuals, who may exploit and consume it on the basis of laws discoverable by reason, might not social and political reality function the same way? The idea, for example, that **a political or social community is not fundamental to, but derivative of human persons also marks a major shift**. The public is what Taylor calls this new group of pre-political persons, without communal marking, other than that which they authorize among themselves.

That the public authorizes the politics which proceed from it is indeed one of the foundational sentiments of democracy. It is not itself power (in this case, the state), but since it calls that power into being, it can also recall it. The public sphere includes civil society, the media,

⁷⁹ Ibid, 76.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 77.

⁸¹ Ibid, 77.

even parties and structures of government. It is a common space in which members of society meet, matters can be discussed and debated, and the public can form a common mind. The political vitality of the public is a top concern, partly because only the public can recall the power invested in the state if it begins to drift from its primary task of serving the best interests of its members. Since the state has no identity, or justification, apart from the public, if the public fails in its vigilance, the state may serve minority interests, and eventually become undemocratic and tyrannical.

The public sphere is therefore first of all independent and prior to the political, and second it is the force that provides the benchmark for political legitimacy. The public serves no power but itself.

If political society is instrumental for something pre-political, something like the public sphere must indeed emerge: “a place to stand, mentally, outside of the polity, as it were, from which to judge its performance.”⁸² A politics of mutual benefit would require an independent sphere in which legitimacy can be consented. This consent is more than simply assenting to one or another governing party, it is completely fundamental. It is only by the public’s consent that a polity can be brought into being. Any collectivity can be authorized only by its constituent membership.

The common mind of the public sphere is not a summary but a critical debate, in which arguments are given and some finally emerge as popular. Consequently, these debates have a normative status and the state ought, and in fact will likely be compelled, to listen to them. This is first because such an opinion is likely to be enlightened, as the majority decision of rational persons, and second, and most importantly, because the people are sovereign. The state is not merely encouraged to heed the public’s wisdom, it is morally bound to do so. The public sphere, then, is “a locus in which rational views are elaborated that should guide government.”⁸³ In order to do this, the public sphere must be a “space of discussion that is self-consciously seen as being outside power. It is supposed to be listened to by power, but it is not itself an exercise of power.”⁸⁴

It is not necessarily new that political power must be supervised and checked by other powers. But it is new, and particularly modern, that such a force is of a human public *outside*

⁸² Ibid, 87.

⁸³ Ibid, 89.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 89.

power. What is checking power is not God or the law of Nature but a kind of “discourse emanating from reason not from power or traditional authority.”⁸⁵ Power, as Habermas puts it, tamed by reason, “*veritas non auctoritas facit legem*.”⁸⁶

In Taylor’s words, what the public sphere does is “enable society to come to a common mind, without the mediation of the political sphere, in a discourse of reason outside power, which nevertheless is normative to power.”⁸⁷

In order to do this, the public sphere must be both pre-political and radically secular. A pre-political public is clearly a different way to imagine social and political order than in the pre-modern world. In the *polis* or the empire people did not have pre-political identities which transcended the laws or bonds of the polity; there was no unity outside of them. While it is true that the Stoics or even the Christian Church had an understanding of an extra-political international society, the nature of that unity had a transcendent characteristic. The public has no transcendent characteristics. In fact, it must also be radically secular.

The radical nature of that secularity is because the public is not merely concerned with the removal of God, or of the religious, but of any idea of society as constituted by something, or some law, which can transcend the immanent will of the public.⁸⁸ Laws, which in pre-modern times may have been thought to have transcendent character, cannot be privileged above the public. The public sphere is constituted by only common, consensual action. The erasure of a polity in the pre-modern world would also end a society, but in modern society while a polity or system might disappear, the public sphere can always start up again making new ones. Taylor has in mind, in particular, the experiences of eighteenth and nineteenth century France. He writes, “The eighteenth-century public sphere thus represents an instance of a new kind: a metatopical common space and a common agency without an action-transcendent constitution, an agency grounded purely in its own common actions.”⁸⁹

What Taylor means by secularity in the public sphere is more than the eclipse of God, but the necessary exclusion of any notion of a higher time, history, tradition, anything that would detract from the sovereignty of the public. There is a rejection of anything higher than this common act, be it tradition or the doctrine of the Church. Time itself is purely profane.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 90.

⁸⁶ As quoted in Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 90.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 91.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 93.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 96.

Homogeneity and equality is made complete in what Taylor calls a “radically purged time consciousness”⁹⁰ – a wholeness of homogenous, profane time. There are no higher times, no transcendent norms, to what people, here today, can determine and decide in the public sphere. The pre-political public authorizes the political, persists outside of power, and assumes a radical secularity. It is a space which has transformed not only politics and religion, but also the boundaries within which these bodies of knowledge and practice are experienced.

3.5.3 The Self-Governing People

The final social form that Taylor describes in the modern social imaginary is the self-governing people, a consequence of the aforementioned sovereignty of the public. The trajectory which he identifies is a shift in the understanding of individuals: **pre-political persons authorizing politics, depends on the sovereignty of those collective persons, but also on the increasing sense of rational, self-government of the persons themselves.**

The assumption, for example, that a pre-political public can come to a common mind that is in the rational self-interest of the collective is significant. The assumption depends on the character of that public, that its persons are in fact sovereign themselves, and that this sovereignty can be collectivized to authorize political power. It also assumes that these persons are rational, self-interested agents, that they will act on that basis, and because of this that their decisions and collective action carry not only the weight of power, but also the weight of moral authority. If there is no higher power, than there is no way to adjudicate right and wrong apart from the people’s sovereignty. Of course, in a Deist universe the assumption is likewise that human rationality is an endowment of a creator, or a universe, that makes the discovery, or construction, of good and evil, right and wrong, possible through natural faculties. All of the practical, social, and political powers of moral-making belong to humans.

Self-government therefore has practical political consequences on the kind of polity called into being, what Taylor calls the “direct access society.” A secular public is also a horizontal one, one in which there can be no higher mediators than the sovereign people. Each member

⁹⁰ Ibid, 97-99.

of society is “immediate to the whole.”⁹¹ Each is equidistant from the centre. The shift is from a “hierarchical order of personalized links to an impersonal egalitarian one; from a vertical world of mediated access to horizontal, direct-access societies.”⁹²

It is not that modern society has dispensed with hierarchies, it is that those hierarchies are no longer personalized and, more importantly, should not change the way persons relate to the polity. The fundamental way of belonging to the state is not mediated or dependent on any other belongings. The link here is to a kind of equality. Taylor says, “Directness of access abolished the heterogeneity of hierarchical belonging. It makes us uniform, and that is one way of becoming equal.”⁹³ And since these mediations no longer define moral and social horizons it becomes easier and easier to conceive of persons as free from them, or at least of choosing them however persons please. Writes Taylor,

Modern individualism, as a moral idea, doesn’t mean ceasing to belong at all – that’s the individualism of anomie and breakdown – but imagining oneself as belonging to ever wider and more impersonal entities: the state, the movement, the community of humankind.

This directness of access and the sovereignty of persons nonetheless strikes a difficult balance with the objectified economy, with a reality in which humans make meaning, rather than uncover or receive it. This tension is referred to in the social sciences as the agency/structure problem: if structures are called into being by sovereign persons, then those same structures should be able to be reformed, or ended by those same persons. But what happens when those structures not only fail to obey the will of people, but also seem to diminish the agency of those who inhabit them? When things go wrong, says Taylor, it’s always someone’s fault.⁹⁴ There are no impersonal forces, only inert reality over which human beings practice control, and so error implicitly suggests responsibility. Sovereign power suggests sovereign control, and thus the tension between agency and structure, between self-determination and mechanization, the at times irrational insistence of subjects that their rulers have powers that they do not, in fact, have (or believe they have).⁹⁵

Although Taylor refrains in large measure from offering normative judgments of the modern social imaginary, he is clear on what he considers to be examples of tension between these

⁹¹ Ibid, 157.

⁹² Ibid, 158.

⁹³ Ibid, 160. This meaning of equality is also at the heart of the multiculturalism debates which Taylor addresses at length in his 2007 report for the province of Quebec.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 130.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 130.

social forms in the modern social imaginary. To say the world used to be understood in a certain way that is different than now is not to offer that one was better or worse. Some things were lost, some were gained, new solutions became available, but also new problems. He calls these new problems the malaises of modernity.

3.6 The Malaises of Modernity

Taylor suggests three malaises, or tensions, which he says are common to expressions of modernity. These tensions also make it clear that the modern social imaginary is not monolithic. Different theoretical and practical proposals can emerge from these assumptions.

The first source of worry is what he calls individualism.⁹⁶ The increasing radicalization of self-government can lead to the fragmentation of social solidarity. Fragmentation in modern societies is generally cause for concern, but the assumptions of self-government were also one of the surest forms of resisting older forms of hegemony and hierarchy. Legal and political debates therefore often take the form not of dispensing with individualism, but of balancing individual rights and preferences alongside collective priorities. To what extent this is possible or practical can mean different political consequences. Indeed, individualism and the deconstruction of hierarchy is a project some still consider incomplete.

But fragmentation remains a serious concern, because while embedded hierarchies restricted human choices and powers, they also provided meaning and orientation. Social lives in the pre-modern world were not simply materials or instruments, but had their own intrinsic meaning. This was true also of rituals and norms in human interaction. Sovereign peoples have difficulty referring back to pre-modern forms of meaning, which deliberately challenge the moral and political sovereignty of persons. This is certainly the case with many world religions. Apart from these pre-modern orientations, individuals are left to make up their own minds as seems best to them on meaning and purpose. A sovereign people can make and unmake, but the powers of moral and political creation, especially in the individual, can also

⁹⁶ Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1991). Parts of Taylor's argument in this book can also be found in *A Secular Age*, chapter 8 "The Malaises of Modernity."

produce an isolating anomie.⁹⁷ Self-governing persons are therefore not an uncomplicated political good. Alexis de Tocqueville talked about the “petits et vulgaires plaisirs”⁹⁸ of democratic individuals and Nietzsche’s last man had at its final stage of decline no aspiration to life but “pitiable comfort.”⁹⁹

A second source of worry is instrumentalism, or instrumental reason. By this Taylor means a kind of rationality from which one can draw and calculate means and ends, where success is measured by maximum efficiency, the best cost-output ratio.¹⁰⁰ A disenchanted cosmos depends on human persons for making meaning in moral conduct, leaving in principle only a rational universe ordered and accessible to individual rationality. But what it does not do is make similar codes or means by which to achieve ends. Consequentialist logic is a real danger in a universe where moral or superior ends may justify the means.

Self-governing individuals with the powers of creation, who owe the universe or God no greater debt than their own flourishing, can risk making that flourishing an exclusivist goal. Creatures and materials serve human flourishing, and are in principle, though not by necessity, open to being treated as raw materials or instruments for the projects of self-desire. Often the strongest arguments that can be delivered against rampant exploitation, for example the negative externalities in ecological damage, are simply the long-term logic of human flourishing. Few other moral arguments have wide social purchase.

Taylor argues that tensions arise here because instrumentalism is both liberating as well as deeply disquieting. Instrumental reason provides a universe at the disposal of human kind, but it also threatens to dominate human life. He writes, “The fear is that things that ought to be determined by other criteria will be decided in terms of ‘cost-benefit’ analysis, that the independent ends that ought to be guiding our lives will be eclipsed by the demand to maximize output.”¹⁰¹ This tension between ends and means yields an enduring tension in the modern social imaginary.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ See for example Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

⁹⁸ Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la Democratie en Amerique* vol. 2 (Paris: Garnier-Flammarton, 1981), 351.

⁹⁹ Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin (Eds), Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). As quoted in Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, 4.

¹⁰⁰ Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, 5.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 5.

¹⁰² See, for example, R. Bellah et al., *The Good Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 114-119.

The technological intensification of instrumental reason often focuses this concern. Already beginning in the early and mid-twentieth century, thinkers like Jacques Ellul lamented the “essential tragedy of a civilization increasingly dominated by technique.”¹⁰³ What Ellul called technique was largely the application of an instrumental reason through the means of technology, a belief in the morally neutral and ultimately efficient methods of technological solutions. This has had important implications for the field of medicine, in particular, where ethical calculus rooted in efficiency is most controversial.¹⁰⁴ Canadian ethicist Margaret Somerville argues that specialized and technical knowledge are often more highly prized in the medical establishment, resulting in an undervaluation of the skills and means of nurses, the human face of social caring, over more highly trained technical specialists. Taylor, who works alongside Somerville at McGill University, argues that instrumental reason is not only an unconscious social orientation, it is structured into political and social institutions. He says, the “mechanisms of social life press us in this direction,”¹⁰⁵ recalling Max Weber’s “iron cage.”

All of which manifests a third tension in the modern social imaginary, that these “institutions-structures of industrial-technological society severely restrict our choices, that they force societies as well as individuals to give weight to instrumental reason that in serious moral deliberation we would never do, and which may even be highly destructive.”¹⁰⁶ So it is that the freedom that is so highly prized in the self-governing individual may be compromised by instrumental reason. The human made laws of social reality produce an inescapable cage of social and political logic. This instrumental logic of political and social life then produces a serious malaise, not unlike the deeper loss of freedom of which early democrats like Alexis de Tocqueville, were concerned with: atomised individuals disconnecting from civic participation in the face of an unassailable system and its logic. The characterization of private citizens increasingly satisfied pursuing private lives apart from the institutions, processes, and values that constitute the common good, or the public sphere, is a real concern in modern democracies like Canada. The more detached the public becomes from the politics it calls into being, the greater the risk that those same powers may serve minority interests, or fall into tyranny.

¹⁰³ Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*. Translated by John Wilkinson (New York: Random House, 1964), v.

¹⁰⁴ For examples of this see the ethicist Margaret Somerville in *The Ethical Imagination: Journeys of the Human Spirit* (Toronto, Anansi Press, 1996).

¹⁰⁵ Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, 7.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 8.

The form of these tensions is, in many respects, unique to the modern social imaginary. It is difficult to imagine individualism yielding a loss of meaning, the eclipse of ends undermined by instrumental reason and a resulting loss of freedom in the pre-modern world. This is not a moral judgment of the modern social imaginary, but it does distinguish the markers as well as the tensions of the modern era from those of the pre-modern world. The pre-modern world certainly had its own tensions, some of which are undoubtedly resolved through the new images and practices of social and political reality, but they are also different. The tensions manifest in the modern social imaginary are specific to its imagination of objectified reality inhabited by a self-governing, pre-political public.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter argued that the religious and the secular are contested concepts, whose meanings shifted in a profound way in the modern social imaginary. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd writes,

Understanding secularism as a set of discursive traditions that seeks to construct both the secular and the religious in particular ways makes clear that defining religion as a fixed and final source of unity and identity with a particular relationship to politics is itself a political move. It is also a theological one. Both are contestable. Any attempt to fix the meaning of religion and then define its relationship either in or out of politics is inherently political and inherently unstable.¹⁰⁷

Both *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism fix the meanings of the religious and the secular in this way, and both are part of a broader Secular transformation, which naturalizes these demarcations of the religious from the secular. The disagreement between these two rival versions is therefore carried on within the broader assumptions of the modern social imaginary. The debate is essentially about whether the religious, or one specific religious tradition, sustains or endangers pluralism, but not over whether the religious and the secular must be demarcated and separable to begin with. More recently Hurd writes, “From the perspective of democratic pluralism, universal forms of politics grounded in the claim to have either transcended religio-cultural particularities (laicism) or to have located the key to

¹⁰⁷ Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*, 44.

democratic moral and political order in a particular religio-cultural tradition or history (JCS) are equally problematic.”¹⁰⁸

This is the major transformation of *A Secular Age*: the parcelling of reality into separate religious and secular spheres, the separation of human politics and flourishing from a higher, or transcendent, will and order. The invention of the religious and the secular makes possible an “immanent order,” one whose interlocking meanings can be uncovered by independent human rationality, and therefore an order that may, or may not, have a transcendent intention or person behind it. This optionality, the meanings and invention of the religious and the secular, is a central feature of both *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism. Both are part of *A Secular Age*.

Taylor’s marks of the modern social imaginary serve to show that *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism have certain conceptual commonalities, and these are often undisclosed because they operate as assumptions of social and political life. What is needed is something like what Taylor has done, a theoretical approach that deliberately discloses the religious and the secular, and helps conceptualize its attendant social forms. The next chapter does a comparative analysis of mainstream international theory and Taylor’s modern social imaginary, to see if these approaches may be serviceable for studying the rival versions of the religious and the secular underlying rival versions of religious freedom.

¹⁰⁸ Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “The Politics of Secularism,” in Timothy Shah, Alfred Stephan, Monica Duffy Toft (eds.), *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 45.

Chapter 4 – The Modern Social Imaginary and International Theory

The attacks of September 11 reveal that all mainstream theories of world politics are relentlessly secular with respect to motivation. They ignore the impact of religion, despite the fact that world-shaking political movements have so often been fueled by religious fervor. – Robert Keohane, in the aftermath of 9/11

4.1 Argument and Structure of the Chapter

This chapter argues that mainstream approaches of international theory are Secular, predicated on the modern shift in the religious and the secular, and assuming many of the social forms of the modern social imaginary, and for this reason international theory is often unable to account for the rival versions of the religious and the secular underlying rival versions of religious freedom. These assumptions were laid out in the last chapter: the objectified economy, the pre-political public, and self-governance. Taken together these social forms sustain a modern social imaginary that is distinct to the modern world, of disembedded, increasingly autonomous individuals making meaning and institutions to serve their ends. Social and political reality have no meaning or power apart from the authorization of these modern persons, what Taylor means by a horizontal and direct-access society. These are foregrounded by a newfound Secularity.

This chapter shows that these marks of the modern social imaginary appear within mainstream international theory, and by so doing argues international theory is at least partly derivative of modern or Secular assumptions, often unaware of the contestability of these assumptions, and of the social construction of the religious and the secular that underlies them.

The argument does this by narrowing the material under analysis in two significant ways. This is covered in greater length in the methodology in the introduction.

First, by international theory is meant international relations theory, and its mainstream manifestations. Therefore mainstream is determined by the discipline's own self-narrations, the way the discipline tells its theoretical stories and the voices it considers authoritative. Principle introductory theoretical texts, specifically John Baylis and Steve Smith's *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* and Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal's *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, narrow the

theoretical approaches considered. These are far from exhaustive, but they are authoritative, the way the story is told and passed on to scholars of international relations. The major, coherent traditions of theory these texts agree on are: Realism, Marxism, Neo-Liberal Institutionalism, Constructivism, and Postmodern or Poststructuralism. Others, such as the New Liberalism, the English School, Critical Theory, and Feminism do appear also, but these do not share significant crossover in introductory texts, and so are not dealt with here. The point is not to prove comprehensively that all international theory falls under Taylor's rubric of the modern social imaginary, but rather to show that many mainstream approaches do, and so sustain the need for a new approach in the discipline: political theology. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that some of the less mainstream approaches, the English School or Christian Realism for example, might more easily incorporate such an approach.

Second, theoretical traditions cannot, of course, be treated monolithically, as the authors and editors of these introductory volumes note at length. So though certain prominent theorists may be absent from this discussion, those who are present are considered because of their citation or contribution within these texts. This includes William Wohlforth, Jack Donnelly, Arthur Stein, Andrew Moravcsik, Nicholas Rengger, Benno Teschke, Ian Hurd, Richard Price, and David Campbell. Again, this has the advantage of specificity, but it suffers from a certain narrowness. Nevertheless, it is the stories the discipline tells about itself that are most important here, and those are arbitrated by two principal, basic, and introductory texts.

It should be noted that although mainstream international theory is shown to be derivative, in some fashion, from the social forms of the modern social imaginary, it is not the argument of this chapter that this is deterministic. There remains real and major disagreement between approaches in international theory, it is simply that this disagreement does not usually include the meanings of the religious and the secular, and how the construction of these meanings has shaped political and social legitimacy. To say this is not to ultimately invalidate mainstream international theory. Indeed, it may be that after disclosing these assumptions, the western theorist finds them valid enough to continue on regardless. However, especially when it comes to understanding rival versions of the religious and the secular, the argument of this chapter is that mainstream international theory will fail in an important respect because its modern assumptions are not only at odds with, but also at a loss to explain, fundamental assumptions of pre-and non-modern social imaginaries.

Table 1.3: The Modern Social Imaginary and International Theory

The Modern Social Imaginary	Realism	Neo-Liberal Institutionalism	Marxism	Social Constructivism	Poststructuralism
“Objectified Economy” – humans see society as an economy, an interlocking set of activities of production, exchange, and consumption, which form a system with its own laws and its own dynamic.	Anarchy, disembedded individuals compete in the absence of a sovereign, producing a predictable world order arising from self-interest.	Human will and desire can overcome and mitigate the condition of anarchy, such that groups can cooperate for mutual benefit.	The relationship between material production and consumption is the fundamental mover of history, the drivers of all social and political structures, and the referent point for right action that brings revolution.	Social reality is constituted by mutual intersubjectivity, the assumption that persons with the powers of making and unmaking meaning are commensurable interlocutors, constantly producing new meanings. Social reality is a game we make and play together.	Meaning in the world is always made by responsible persons, who are nonetheless also the products of already existing meanings. The world is intersubjective and inter-textual, leading to an anarchy of textual power, where the strong make what meaning they will, and the weak suffer the meanings they must.
“The Public Sphere” – a political or social community is not fundamental to, but derivative of, human persons.	Groups do not exist external of, or prior to, the individuals that come together to make them.	Groups do not exist external of, or prior to, the individuals that come together to make them.	A pre-political proletariat judges political structures instrumentally, on their material and therefore human equity.	The public is not only pre-political, it is the source of all social reality. The only constraints on human social activity are other inherited or sustained human social forms.	A pre-political perpetuity, the meaning of the political and the social are <i>both</i> fundamental to and derivative of human persons.
“The Self-Governing People” – pre-political persons authorizing politics, depends on the sovereignty of those collective persons, but also on the increasing sense of rational, self-government of the persons themselves.	Egoism and the power politics that it produces depends on sovereignty ultimately residing in persons, and their groups, whose self-interested actions can be rationally depended on to produce a kind of predictable stability and order.	Modern man, freedom and autonomy; the idea that human will and desire can ultimately be sovereign in human affairs (self-interest may not be only material).	Materially equal persons will be basically rational, and that basic rationality can be counted on to produce spontaneous harmony, largely because rational beings recognize the mutual benefit of complementary activities.	There is no meaning to social reality except that which human persons make, and debate is therefore over how easy or hard it is to make or unmake human meaning.	The unsettled subject, the subject does not exist prior to the formation of any social order but is inextricably bound up with the formative process. Power is productive not only in the formation of specific social orders but also in the formation of subjects.

4.2 Realism and the Modern Social Imaginary

Realism claims one of the longest intellectual ancestries in the discipline, making the entire study of international relations, in a sense, “inexplicable without a grounding in realism.”¹ Despite this, or rather because of it, realism is a dense and complex intersection of ideas and thinkers that by no means find a simple harmony. William Wohlforth writes that “the notion that realism – this centuries-old foundational school of thought – can be and has to be reduced to a single, internally consistent and logically coherent theory is the taproot of the greatest misunderstanding.”² Jonathan Haslam writes that realism is best seen as “a spectrum of ideas . . . rather than a fixed point of focus with sharp distinction;”³ Garnett describes it as “attitude of mind.”⁴ Gilpin calls it a “philosophical disposition”⁵ and Coady analogously relates it to a religion, saying it is a “combination of an often loosely related set of beliefs, a way of thinking and responding, a sometimes desperate desire to preach to the uncomprehending heathen, and a pantheon of canonical exemplars or saints whose very diverse intellectual and practical lives are seen to embody the virtues of the religion.”⁶

It would be wrong, therefore, to suggest that realism is a singular or homogenous thing. Thucydides and Augustine, for example, may well be appealed to by the realist canon but their assumptions, while important, are not obviously modern in Taylor’s meaning of the term. Indeed, if by realism is meant an exhaustive analysis of the canon, this task alone would be worthy of a dissertation. What follows is a basic comparative analysis of mainstream realism’s tradition, as recognized in the discipline, with Charles Taylor’s marks of the modern social imaginary. These include, according to William Wohlforth and Jack Donnelly: groupism, egoism, anarchy, and power politics.⁷

¹ William C. Wohlforth, “Realism” in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*, 131.

² Wohlforth, 131.

³ Jonathan Haslam, *No Virtue like Necessity: Realist thought in International Relations since Machiavelli* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 249.

⁴ John C. Garnett, *Commonsense and the Theory of International Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 110.

⁵ Robert Gilpin, “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism” in Keohane (ed), *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 304.

⁶ C.A.J. Coady, “The Moral Reality of Realism” in *The Journal of Applied Philosophy* (22, 2005: 121-136), 122.

⁷ Wohlforth, 132-134.

4.2.1 The Realist Economy – Anarchy and Objectification

Anarchy and its assumptions are not exclusively modern concepts. But the modern transformation comes to define anarchy as something different than how it was described in pre-modern antiquity. Anarchy in mainstream international relations means more than simply “might makes right.” Where in antiquity, Thucydides, Augustine, and others made a very real acknowledgement that the pursuit of power and security can produce a kind of amoral politics, this acknowledgement is not the same as that of Hobbes’s *Leviathan* or Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, where individuals group together in their own self-interest to make a community, an economy, out of nothing but the spontaneous rational will of persons. **The realist economy, in Taylor’s language, is one in which disembedded individuals compete in the absence of a sovereign, producing a predictable world order arising from self-interest, often materially defined.**

Anarchy in international relations is characteristically described in Hobbesian terms. That is, it is not the popular apocalyptic collapse of rules and laws – in fact, few things are more *rules based* than anarchy. The argument that anarchy is rules based can be demonstrated in part by the ubiquity of game theory in the realist economy. Gaming follows careful rules that spontaneously order international interactions quite apart from the direct, sustaining intervention of a sovereign. These rules themselves, principally egoistic entities with limited external restraints, are in many ways modern and secular abstractions. The idea that, for example, there is no higher law, no higher authority, to which self-interested players in the international system may at some point prove accountable depends on a radical secularity.

Anarchy, then, is the utter lack of a sovereign, whether that be a sovereign government, a sovereign time, a sovereign nature, or a sovereign god.⁸ In the realist economy this produces a dilemma: “constant fear and incessant need to acquire, maintain, demonstrate, and exercise power.”⁹ This “dramatically shapes the nature of international politics.”¹⁰ In a world where power begets power, states – as coherent and unitary actors – must act regularly in their self-interest to maintain and increase their position relative to others.

⁸ Jack Donnelly, “Twentieth-Century Realism,” Terry Nardin and David R. Mapel (eds.), *Traditions of International Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 87.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Wohlforth, 133.

This, in turn, creates rules: spontaneous, complementary order generated from the disembedded, self-interest of individuals. This gives rise to what in the later twentieth century is called neo-Realism. Neo-Realism, for example, is less concerned with the abstractions of Thomas Hobbes or Adam Smith, and more impressed with the logical, rules based system that those abstractions produce. It is a second order of abstraction, which positivist approaches generally tend to revolve around, but it depends as surely as realism generally on the assumptions behind the first, fundamental condition of anarchy.

This approach was much at odds with early and mid-twentieth century realists, like Hans Morgenthau, who was a “consistent opponent of the behaviouralists and of the claim that moral and political thought had no role in the study of international relations.”¹¹ Morgenthau waged an unyielding campaign starting with *Scientific man versus power politics* (1947) against this trend, as did realists like George Kennan, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Walter Lippman.¹² These were opponents of the extension of realist abstractions into the realm of the empirical, people who recognized that these abstractions deserved to be debated, not simply installed. Their historical and theological training made them not only disclose but often debate the nature and substance of the claims of the realist economy. These early thinkers were part of what was once a different kind of English School, sometimes labelled Christian Realists. The deliberate religious tone of their thought qualified anarchy in an important respect, because in a universe in which God and *his* sovereignty persist, international anarchy can never be absolute. For this reason some have begun to point back to thinkers like Martin Wight, E.H. Carr, Reinhold Niebuhr, Herbert Butterfield, and others as potential allies in understanding the construction of the religious and the secular in international relations.¹³

However, for various reasons, this tradition was eclipsed within both the English School and the realist school, overcome by the second order of abstraction which produced neo-Realist or structural realist thought. In structural realism, anarchy is a “basic condition,” one whose

¹¹ Nicholas Rengger, “Political theory and International Relations: promised land or exit from Eden,” *International Affairs* (76, 4 2000), 757.

¹² See for example Michael-Joseph Smith, *Realist thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Joel Rosenthal, *Righteous realists: responsible power in the nuclear age* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); A.J.H. Murray, *Reconstructing realism* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997).

¹³ See for example Scott Thomas, “Faith, History and Martin Wight: The Role of Religion in the Historical Sociology of the English School of International Relations,” *International Affairs* 77, no. 4 (2001): 905-929, Charles Jones, “Christian Realism and the foundations of the English School,” *International Relations* 17, no. 3 (2003): 371-387, and Jodok Troy, *Christian Approaches to International Affairs* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). This tradition does have a great deal of promise for studying the religious and the secular in international relations, and would likely be sympathetic to the approach of political theology this dissertation suggests.

characteristic assumptions are increasingly obscured. John Herz writes that structural realism must be,

distinguished from that of Hans Morgenthau, who sees the chief cause of power politics in innate human aggressiveness, or of Reinhold Niebuhr, who finds its deepest ground in human pride and sinfulness. Such factors, to be sure, may constitute additional grounds for conflicts and war, but the security dilemma remains an inescapable basic condition, even in the absence of aggressivity or similar factors.¹⁴

This naturalization of an otherwise contestable, and derivative image of the modern social imaginary, is consistent in much of realism. Anarchy is the providential, spontaneous outcome of self-interested actors, whose self-interest is defined in radically secular fashion.

4.2.2 The Realist Public – Groupism and the State

William Wohlforth argues that that realism need be statist. He says that there is “no assumption about the nature of the polity” and that “it may apply to any social setting where groups interact.”¹⁵ This expands realism’s explanatory power, at the same time as situating it historically, rather than being limited by only the modern state. However, Tim Dunne and Brian Schmidt, in their own chapter on Realism in Baylis and Smith’s text, do simply call realism “statist.”¹⁶ Wohlforth’s argument has historical merit, but Dunne and Schmidt show that in the mainstream debate, realism generally defers to the modern state, and less to its historical invention, as the main actor. But leaving aside Dunne and Schmidt’s more obviously modern account of realism, even Wohlforth’s argument for groupism carries with it those marks.

What counts as political for groupism is highly significant here, and especially how those groups come into being, and how they are justified. Recall that in Charles Taylor’s modern social imaginary, states themselves, or groups of any kind, are pre-politically authorized. That is, their authority was germinated not by God, or Nature, or some cosmic contract, but by the

¹⁴ John Herz, *The Nation-State and the Crisis of World Politics* (New York: David McKay, 1976), 10. Also see Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), 62-63.

¹⁵ Wohlforth, 133.

¹⁶ Tim Dunne and Brian C. Schmidt, “Realism,” in Baylis and Smith, 100. The assumptions of essential realism they list as: statism, survival, and self-help.

horizontal consent of constituents. **Groups do not exist external of, or prior to, the individuals that come together to make them.** Further, those groups have as their primary task that which self-interested actors prize above all else: security. This first and fundamental task of the modern state is therefore the key legitimizer for the modern polity. The high priority of the “national interest” in the realist canon, with its emphasis on material power as the condition for security, illustrates this. Of course, in what respect security can be wholly or even fundamentally defined in a material sense is up for significant debate in the global community.¹⁷

Contrary to this, imagine the pre-modern or non-modern world in which it may be possible, not only that groups exist prior to the persons that make them, but that these groups have aims and goals that eclipse those of its constituents. For example, in the Hebrew canon is found the often confusing judgment rendered against monarchs in ancient Israel who produce, on the whole, peace, security, and prosperity, and yet are judged as unfit rulers, eventually dismissed by the sovereign of Israel, the Hebrew God. The primary task of Israel and its monarchs was not security or prosperity; instead, those would follow as marks of cosmic blessings provided that covenant with the first commandment was kept: fealty and love of God. In fact, the attempt to establish security for the community of Israel apart from, or despite, this first commandment is seen as a major failing, and ultimately cited as the rationale for the community’s collapse and exile. Scott Thomas writes, “They [Israel] sell out their birthright and abandon their responsibility to promote *shalom*, settling for the immediate gratification of idolatry political stability, and material prosperity.”¹⁸ Such is an example of a political and social grouping whose aims, and whose very existence, preceded and superseded those of its constituents.

4.2.3 Self-Governance – Egoism and Power Politics

Egoism and power politics are the final two essential conditions of realism, according to Wohlforth. Dunne and Schmidt call it self-help and survival. Both of these conditions are

¹⁷ See, for example, Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Lynne Rienner, 1991).

¹⁸ Scott Thomas, “Isaiah’s Vision of Human Security: Virtue-Ethics and International Politics,” *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 4, no. 3 (Winter 2006), 30.

qualified by the kind of fundamental secularity that that is key to the modern social imaginary. That is, the rationale under which groups come to function is one in which there is no higher law or sovereign than the self, or the group, whose primary task and making is by persons, and for their survival. That this is Secular in a clear political and social way is obvious: any higher calculations of cost/benefit, of duties, loyalties, or loves owed are not part of the realist system. **Egoism and the power politics that it produces depends on sovereignty ultimately residing in persons, and their groups, whose self-interested actions can be rationally depended on to produce a kind of predictable stability and order.** For this predictable economy of anarchy to be sustained, the anthropocentric shift in the modern social imaginary must be assumed. Persons must be rational, that rationality must be predicated on mundane or material self-interests, and only thereafter can a spontaneous, providential ordering of the international system take place. This is part of the reason balance is so important to the realist approach, and further why national interests, which are not driven by conventional meanings of power politics, can prove so confusing, possibly rogue.

The anthropocentric shift and self-government depends on the religious as a discrete category from politics, and so does the logic of egoism and power politics. Power and its social accounts are ultimately about control and resources.¹⁹ Resources and control are mundane and secular, its social and political meaning made by disembedded persons, who are egoistically driven into groups to make stronger claims to it. Accounting for anything like the religious in this framework would be enormously difficult, other than simply calling it dressing on material realities. The religious as the inverse of the secular is assumed and depended on for the rational organization of international politics. Any higher order, or higher sovereign, would fundamentally disrupt the logic of the mainstream realist account of anarchy.

This is secularity that is deeper than simply overlooking the religious, it is Secular in the fashion Taylor intends it. Accompanying Wohlforth, Jack Donnelly writes that “the priority of the pursuit of power marginalizes *all* other objectives.”²⁰ There is an ethics to realism, as Donnelly argues, but those ethics are about right action within a system purged of cosmic consequence and meaning beyond that which persons make.

¹⁹ Wohlforth, 133.

²⁰ Jack Donnelly, “The Ethics of Realism” in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*, 150.

In fact, Donnelly goes further, saying that this has produced no shortage of anxiety in the realist tradition about instrumental and consequentialist thinking, and the collapse of morality generally. It is not that morality is impossible, it is simply that it is not installed as a feature of the system beyond that which human persons make. People certainly can make moral claims without the need for a religious or sovereign deity to sustain them, but realism rather explicitly suggests those claims will necessarily by virtue of human nature be secondary to self- or national-interest.

Yet, as has been argued, this is not the case in the whole tradition of realism, notably that of the early twentieth century realist thinkers such as Morgenthau, who argued that “it is the tragedy of man that he is incapable, by dint of his nature, to do what Christian ethics demand of him.”²¹ Niebuhr too wrote that “nations are subject, as are individuals, to an internal tension between the claims of self and the larger claims of love.”²² Those “larger claims of love” and their sources have, in large measure, been eclipsed within mainstream realism, but it is certainly not impossible that a new reading of early century realists might recover them. That, of course, would mean a radical redefinition of anarchy, the nature of persons and the state, and meaning and relative priority of material power. This, perhaps, could even mean the disclosure and debate of the meanings of the religious and the secular.

4.3 (Neo)Liberal Institutionalism and the Modern Social Imaginary

Like realism, liberalism is a highly differentiated tradition of thought, though also like it there are certain core assumptions in the tradition that its many mainstream approaches depend on. These include its parallel emphasis on self-interested individuals, self-government, and freedom, the spontaneous ordering of material and social interests, and its high priority on equality and agency. These are parallels because in many respects there is a great deal of repetition in the assumptions of a liberal and realist order, especially as it relates to the task and constitution of the state. The differences, then, are not in the fundamental marks of the modern social imaginary, but in the relative constitution of self-interest, and whether and to

²¹ Morgenthau, *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 221. See also George Kennan, *Realities of American Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 49.

²² Harry R. Davis and Robert C. Good, *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics: His Political Philosophy and its Application to Our Age as Expressed in His Writings* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 160.

what extent human agency and its institutions (economic and political) can mitigate the condition of anarchy.

What is an essentially modern anthropological debate about the nature and extent of human rationality was intensified by both the First and Second World Wars. Liberalism emerged with a new post-war emphasis on international institutions as structures to manage the anarchic and egoistic politics of the international realm. It was a shift in theory that mirrored, in the argument of theorists like Arthur Stein, a shift in reality.²³ This argument first established the League of Nations, and later articulated the new doctrines of functionalism, complex interdependence, and the United Nations after the Second World War.

It was in this context that Robert Keohane²⁴ and Joseph Nye's *Power and Interdependence* (1977) emerged as a bulwark of neoliberal institutionalism. But *Power and Interdependence* did not make a radical break with international orthodoxy. James Richardson writes, "They did not seek to replace realist theory, but to limit its scope."²⁵ They introduced the term "complex interdependence" to identify areas of international cooperation, regulation, and regimes. Writes Richardson,

The replacement of the comparative-sociological style of *Power and Interdependence* by the economics-based "rationalist" style of neoliberal institutionalism was occasioned by acceptance on the part of a group of liberal scholars of the metatheoretical assumptions of rational choice theory and of the core realist assumptions that states remain the central actors in international politics. . . . The main difference with neorealism was the claim that, nonetheless, there was far greater scope for international cooperation than neorealist theory would have it, and that institutions played an important role in facilitating this cooperation.²⁶

This institutional cooperation could manage the effects of egoism and anarchy in international relations. This shifted the realist argument much more than replaced it, arguing that a more radical emphasis on the self-government of persons, and their autonomous powers of making and unmaking political meaning, could effectively counter-balance the

²³ Arthur A. Stein, "Neoliberal Institutionalism" in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*, 202.

²⁴ Keohane has since moved beyond the confines of neoliberalism, or at least rational choice theory, combining this approach with others – sociological, historical, and normative. But regardless, he and many other major thinkers, including John Ruggie, who has moved more toward constructivism, and John Ikenberry, drawing on rational choice theory, constitute continuities within neoliberalism. Richardson discusses this work in overview in his chapter on "The Ethics of Neoliberal Institutionalism" in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*, 223-225.

²⁵ James L. Richardson, "The Ethics of Neoliberal Institutionalism" in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*, 223.

²⁶ Richardson, "The Ethics of Neoliberal Institutionalism", 223. See also, Keohane, *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory* (Boulder, Colo: Westview, 1984), 1-20, 101-131.

more mechanistic and deterministic rules of realist anarchy. If, after all, anarchy is the production of egoistic actors, then it should not, in principal, be beyond those actors to redefine what their own self-interest may be, and to appeal to cooperation rather than competition as a better strategy for survival, security, and prosperity. At stake was the practical importance of international institutions, but at its heart were debates over relative and absolute gains, agency and structure, economy and self-government.

4.3.1 Self-Government - Modern Man, Freedom, and Autonomy

Kenneth Minogue writes that fundamental to liberal thought is the “belief in rational harmony, . . . of ultimate agreement and . . . **the idea that will and desire can ultimately be sovereign in human affairs.**”²⁷ The source and constitution of this social order were objects of hot debate. Early liberals like Richard Cobden emphasized, for example that “the progress of freedom depends more upon the maintenance of peace, the spread of commerce, the diffusion of education than upon the labours of cabinets and foreign offices.”²⁸

The liberal articulation of self-government is therefore two-fold. First, there is the freedom and equality to which human persons are naturally born. The well-recognized influence of Rousseau’s famous dictum that “man is born free” is clear. Human kind is a moral and political *tabula rasa*. There is no higher time, tradition, god, nature, or power that must necessarily imprint human beings with a specific nature. Human persons are disembedded and independent of all such powers. Yet liberal thinking also recognizes that freedom is not the universal condition of such human persons. The explanation lies in part in Rousseau’s completed phrase. Yes, “man” is born free, but also “he” is everywhere in chains. This provides the institutional and material emphasis of liberalism. If self-authorizing individuals are the ones who make social and political meaning and order, then it is the rationality of those individuals that is most essential. Chains, then, for the Rousseau-inspired liberal are any externality which compromises the innate, rationality of persons. This includes especially hierarchical institutions and social formation, which suppresses individual identity and

²⁷ Kenneth Minogue, *The Liberal Mind* (New York: Vantage Books, 1963), 200. Emphasis added.

²⁸ Richard Cobden, *Political Writings*, 2 vols. (London: Fisher Unwin, 1903), 216.

rationale, and material inequality, which causes disharmony and conflict, preventing the higher order of human rationality from governing social and political affairs.

So, as newer liberals argue,²⁹ globalization places different demands on individuals who self-define their horizons. It is a bottom-up theory, or a pluralist view, meaning “the most fundamental . . . task of liberal international relations theory is to define the impact of the shifting terms of economic, social, and cultural globalization on social actors and the competing demands they will thus place upon states.”³⁰ The individual is primarily constitutive of the orders and systems that follow and therefore it is the constellation and service of his or her interests that are of top concern.

The twin challenge of education or formation and material equity means that liberalism has a unique understanding of both the nature of disharmony and its potential solutions. Andrew Moravcsik writes, “Liberal theory rejects the utopian notion that an *automatic* harmony of interests exists among individuals and groups in society; scarcity and differentiation introduce an inevitable measure of competition.”³¹ Individuals who do not, for reasons of either scarcity or differentiation, move toward a harmony of interests are understood to exist, however this is not the natural human condition, and such people “may be risk-acceptant or irrational.”³²

There are clear similarities here with realism, but the liberal account relies for its explanation of international affairs not just on the condition of anarchy, but on the agency and self-government of persons. Those self-governing persons are able through primacy of will and desire to overcome the basic condition of anarchy, if freed of the negative externalities of hierarchy and material inequality. Self-interest, then, which was a basic condition of realism, is a variable condition in liberalism, which defaults to the individual the powers to make and unmake even their own interests. Those interests, in the absence of hierarchical or material subversion, need not *necessarily* prove combative or violent, but may in fact be cooperative and cosmopolitan. It should be clear that the pre-and nonmodern religious, with its emphasis on mediated hierarchy and its cosmic relativization of material equity, unless privatized, will almost surely be one of those chains that suppress human rationality.

²⁹ Andrew Moravcsik, “The New Liberalism” in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*, 236.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 236.

³¹ Andrew Moravcsik, “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics.” *International Organization* (51, 4 Autumn 1997), 517.

³² *Ibid*, 517.

This is more or less consistent with the modern social imaginary. Again, we see the autonomous human being pre-politically authorizing the *polis*, but this time, unlike realism, the scales are tipped in favour of self-government, so that the rational desire and will of human persons can mitigate the condition of anarchy. The level to which this is possible depends on the manner to which a societies constitutive members can be said to be free, to be both rational (educated) and secure (materially, politically). This can take on more worrying tones when rogue states, whose rationality cannot be trusted, or the work of state-building are invoked in international relations. There are, after all, those who will not choose to be free for reasons of ideology or privilege. In these cases, liberalism recognizes with realism the necessity of keeping a consistent and predictable order, and so in another of Rousseau's famous phrases, "they must be forced to be free."

4.3.2 The Liberal Economy – Interdependence and Equality

If human beings are basically neutral creatures, compelled to neither moral nor amoral behaviour except by externalities, then the priority of international relations should be about influencing the systems and conditions within which persons and societies exist. It is not only possible but likely that societies that suffer hierarchical regimes and large disparities in material equity will produce unstable, irrational regimes prone to the sort of anarchy realism claims is fundamental. Indeed, where realism assumes that self-interested individuals will group together for common security, thereby creating a competitive, anarchic space in the international system, the liberal order assumes that **human will and desire can overcome and mitigate this condition, such that groups can cooperate for mutual benefit, and a more sustainable order**. But this order is not necessarily spontaneous, for the very reasons that realists cite: self-interest and inequality. What is needed is the simultaneous realization that it is in a person's self-interest to harmoniously cooperate.

In a way, this applies the same logic to the international system as to the domestic political community. Even in realism, individuals come together in common cause for survival. Liberalism argues that a similar thing is possible internationally, but where ultimate sovereignty cannot be invested, certain overlapping interests – often manifested in institutions

– can lessen the anarchic tension, and produce the possibility of not only relative, but also absolute gains.

It is not, of course, that anarchy does not exist. Anarchy exists also at the domestic level. It is simply that anarchy can be mitigated by self-governing persons, just like in domestic politics, by enlightened self-interest, the recognition that interlocking cooperation produces the most stable and complementary order. Of high importance, then, is equality opposed to hierarchy, and interdependent cooperation between rational agents rather than, for example, an organic response to created or given structures.

The liberal logic of interdependence and equality also cultivates the suspicion of non-liberal, irrational, or religious regimes. Irrational and unequal people, in the liberal mind, cannot be trusted to act predictably. A system of interdependence cannot apply to regimes outside this logic. Liberal international politics must therefore first work to transform hearts and minds, to implant the assumptions of the modern social imaginary, and what it says about persons, politics, and order, before an educated, materially satisfied politics can flourish.

Systems, especially material and ideational ones, that unite citizens are by far the surest barriers, though not fool-proof, to the international anarchy. States that do not respect these institutions, or whose political systems are not the aggregate of rational individuals, may be regarded with suspicion and, probably, as barriers toward the reformation of a just and complementary world order.

4.3.3 The Public Sphere – Power and Agency

The liberal account of the political, and of the public, is essentially the same as realism. **Groups in liberalism too do not exist external of, or prior to, the individuals that come together to make them.** Regardless of how much power and capacity is invested in institutions, these institutions and systems have no actual political life apart from the investment of persons. If anything, the more radical emphasis on self-government and human will and desire as superseding stark material interests means that the powers of the sovereign individual are expanded in the liberal order.

This is not to say that institutions, especially political ones, cannot take on a life or power that in turn shapes and influences human persons. That is, in fact, the intent. It is simply to say that those same institutions are made by persons for the betterment of persons, and they have no independent meaning or existence prior to human agency. This, again, in stark contrast to the pre-modern and nonmodern world.

This emphasis on human agency and power does help explain groups and their competing perspectives and rationale in a way in which realism does not. One might find, for example, competing strategies for foreign policy emerging within different government and non-government sectors, depending on their end goals and the desires of their constituency. Individual will is important in liberalism in a way in which, for example, the condition of the international system as anarchic is more fundamental to realism.

This pre-political autonomy, rationality, and human agency does at times, however, seem in tension with the liberal assumption that groups and persons can be conditioned, if all else is equal, to cooperate. Consider, for example, why educated, materially satisfied people would pursue radically different political options. There is no easy liberal answer for this. More problematically, argues religious freedom expert Paul Marshall, it is unclear why Saudi millionaires would finance terrorism against the very system that furnished this largesse. Marshall says the liberal explanation for religious terrorism is often about how poor or uneducated the extremists are. But, he says, “They [radical Islam] are not composed of poor or uneducated people groups [who] know nothing of the world.” He writes,

Hassan al-Turabi of the Sudan has advanced degrees from the University of London and the Sorbonne. Abbasi Madani, a leader of Algeria’s Islamic Salvation Front, received a doctorate in education from the University of London. Mousa Abu Marzzok, the head of Hamas’ political committee, has a doctorate in engineering from Louisiana Technical University. Sayyid Qutb, the shaper of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, spent several years in the United States, which is precisely where he became a militant. The Ayatollah Khomeini lived in Paris for many years. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed studied in a Baptist college in North Carolina. . . . Nor does poverty explain much, . . . The terrorists themselves are usually wealthy and privileged.³³

The liberal public and the liberal power of human agency can tolerate no power greater than the individual, or their authorized collectives, no spectrum higher than the horizontal, and no God greater than the people. Its Secular framework depends on the increasing power of the

³³ Paul Marshall, “Understanding Radical Islam,” Chaplin and Joustra (Eds), *God and Global Order* (Baylor: Baylor University Press, 2010), 73-74.

sovereign person, in a world whose meaning is made, not uncovered, and whose very political order can therefore be made and unmade by human will and desire as manifest in institutions.

4.4 Marxism and the Modern Social Imaginary

It has been pointed out more than once that the problem with Marxist international relations is that there is *no* Marxist international relations,³⁴ and further that its perspective on things like religion is dismissive at best, downright hostile at worst. Steven Lukes writes,

Marx's view of morality . . . is exactly parallel to his view of religion, concerning what he [Marx] wrote, "the abolition of religion as illusory happiness of the people is a demand for their true happiness. The call to abandon illusions about their condition is the call to abandon a condition which requires Illusions."³⁵

Of international relations, Nicholas Rengger writes that, "Marx did not have a 'theory' of international relations at all . . . rather he had a theory about social formation that had implications for the international dimensions of social organization."³⁶ In light of this it would be difficult not to resonate with Benno Teschke when he writes that "its integration into the Western canon of international relations approaches is belated, partial and problematic, and symptomatic of the politics of social science."³⁷

Yet Marxism has in many ways a sibling likeness to realism. For example, Nicholas Rengger argues that both realism and Marxism emerged from a common objectivist perspective, which had "no place for ethics in political life at all."³⁸ Its ethics are, as the charge is often made of realism too, consequentialist. Consider the English socialist and writer William Morris, who writes, "You ought to read Marx . . . he is the only completely scientific

³⁴ See for example, Martin Wight, "Why is there no international theory?" in Butterfield and Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966) and R.N. Berki, "On Marxian thought and the problem of international relations" in *World Politics* (24: 1971), 80-105.

³⁵ Steven Lukes, *Moral Conflict and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 187.

³⁶ Nicholas Rengger, "The Ethics of Marxism" in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*, 192.

³⁷ Benno Teschke, "Marxism" in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*, 163.

³⁸ Nicholas Rengger, "The Ethics of Marxism," 188.

economist on our side.”³⁹ Morris alerts us to two oft-forgotten truisms: that Marx and Engels were contributing to an already ongoing project, a distinctively modern epistemology; and second that their contribution was not as anthropologists or philosophical historians but rather as technical specialists, valued for their objective rigour, not their deep normative analysis. No clergy looked to Marx for theology and neither did Marx conceive of providing a new set of values by which to live and understand the world.

It was not until fifty years after Marx’s death that thinkers began to develop ideas of international relations, if possibly because his writings that might have helped these understandings were not published until that time.⁴⁰ The trajectory of Marxist thought after this period is far from clear or homogenous. Chris Brown, for example, argues that at least three traditions have a reasonable claim to the Marxist title.⁴¹

The first and perhaps most famous is Marxist-Leninism or Soviet Marxism. By contrast, the second, Western or classical Marxism, is present in more fringe sectors, such as the academy, rather than entrenched in the factory or mass party. The third tradition, that of third-world or neo-Marxism, has more official status, though its notions of dependency and world-systems are at times considered inherently “un-Marxist.”⁴²

Others, like Nicholas Rengger, argue for four stages in the development of Marxism.⁴³ The first, the “founders” dominated by Marx and Engels; the second, the “golden age” roughly leading up to the First World War; the third, so-called “breakdown” and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, where disparate Marxisms became violent rivals; and fourth, what Rengger calls “eclipse” following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989.

For all of the variation between “ethical” Marx and “scientific” Marx⁴⁴ and the long and complex tradition of Marxism, Marxist thought also has essential assumptions that are derivative of the modern social imaginary: rational persons dependent on material equity

³⁹ E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London: Merlin, 1977), 761.

⁴⁰ Chris Brown, “Marxism and International Ethics,” *Traditions of Ethics in International Relations*, 226.

⁴¹ Chris Brown, “Marxism and International Ethics,” *Traditions of Ethics in International Relations*, 227.

⁴² See for example Immanuel Wallerstein, “The inter-state structure of the modern world-system.” Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski (eds), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁴³ Nicholas Rengger, “The Ethics of Marxism,” 188-189.

⁴⁴ Nicholas Rengger parallels these as two basic hermeneutical approaches to Marx that divide scholars and students of Marxism.

(externalities), and an instrumental politics fit for judgment only by such rational, and materially equal persons.⁴⁵

4.4.1 The Marxist Economy – Secular Materialism and Consequentialism

Marx and Engels were in many ways determined to avoid the moralism of other traditions of socialist thought in the nineteenth century. The evolution of the state system, particularly the ultimate demise of capitalism, was cast in scientific rather than moral terms. Marx allegedly burst out laughing whenever anyone used the word morality.⁴⁶ This suspicion was deeply rooted in a secularized view of history and progress. The stages of history and of human progress were determined, for Marx, by materialism and the production and reproduction of material life, not by the moral or normative codes that were derivative of material life. **The relationship between material production and consumption is the fundamental mover of history, the drivers of all social and political structures, and the referent point for right action which brings revolution.** Further, such materials were about human consumption and production, externalities to be exploited in equal measure by persons. Material reality is not a gift, it is not created, or relational, but it is radically secular, and in principle its raw materials must be made equally exploitable to all persons. Any normative or religious intervention could only be the result of material interests, another bourgeois attempt to secure control over production and consumption. This foundation of secular, material production was the cornerstone on which all else rested. Marx wrote,

The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of the material process . . . morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Nicholas Rengger summarizes these assumptions in his chapter, “The Ethics of Marxism” in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*, 190.

⁴⁶ Anthony Skillen, *Ruling Illusions* (Hassocks: Wheatsheaf, 1977), 129.

⁴⁷ David McLellan, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 164. As quoted in Chris Brown, “Marxism and International Ethics,” 228.

Steven Lukes points out, quoting *The German Ideology*, that morality, “like religion, metaphysics . . . all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness” had “no history, no development, but men, altering their material production and their material intercourse alter – along with these – the real existence and their thinking and the products of their thinking.”⁴⁸ Marx argued that there could be no independent or detached view of material reality, and that politics was therefore always the result of particular material interests.

This was the reason why the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat should not necessarily be concerning for the Marxist. If human persons are rational, and that rationality can only be suppressed by material inequality, than materially equal human persons will be free and make rational choices. To say that the proletariat should act morally is therefore either to be redundant or to supersede human rationality with a bourgeois morality. Chris Brown writes,

To suggest that the proletariat should be governed in its behaviour by a morality is the equivalent either of saying that the proletariat should act in its own interests – which is redundant – or that it should act in the interests of the bourgeoisie – which is reactionary. What it cannot be is the equivalent of saying that the proletariat should act in accordance with some transcendent code, because no such code exists.⁴⁹

For the Marxist, is all human action then derivative of material forces? These are genuinely difficult questions for the Marxist, and Nicholas Rengger suggests that Marx himself struggled with this. Rengger writes that in certain 1844 manuscripts, a much more obvious commitment to an ethic derived from thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau emerges, “an image of human beings as ‘naturally’ free and self-governing but as currently enslaved by modes of production that ‘alienate’ them from their true selves.”⁵⁰ Lukes agrees with this, citing, “Marx’s view of morality . . . [which] exactly parallels to his view of religion, concerning which he wrote, ‘the abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is a demand for their true happiness. The call to abandon illusions about their condition is the call to abandon a condition which requires Illusions.’”⁵¹ Just as in liberalism, the self-governing self, to be truly self-governing, must “break the chains” that prevent the rational self from overcoming, after which there is no danger of a repressive political project.

⁴⁸ Stephen Lukes, *Marxism and Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 181.

⁴⁹ Chris Brown, “Marxism and International Ethics,” 228.

⁵⁰ Rengger, “The Ethics of Marxism,” 189.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 190.

Yet unlike liberalism, which has an implicit pedagogical strategy in its focus on education, Marxism has often lead to an ethic of extreme consequentialism. In many respects, Marxism is more utopian than liberalism, arguing as it does that the conditions which make for inequality and conflict can be ultimately erased by equal access to the means of production. Marxism tells one where to go (ends), but offers little on how to get there (means). Right action becomes a matter of theory, not morality. There is no question of codes of conduct and principles, only correctly grasping what courses of action correspond to the needs of the moment, a moment which can only be understood in the world historical Marxist narrative of production and consumption.

If this strikes the contemporary theorist as a deeply disturbing pragmatism *capable* of, though not necessarily requiring, justifying a terrible politics in the name of ushering along world history, one might begin to understand the Soviet-Marxist imagination. Such an approach can easily be abused into dispassionate and pseudo-scientific justifications for all manners of atrocities, a sad, and altogether unsympathetic historical incarnation of men and women who embraced early Marxism often precisely *for* its criticisms of such abuses.

Consider, for example, Marx and Engels's writing on the problem of war. Writing on the Eastern Question and the Crimean War, they focus on the impact of this conflict on the overall balance of force in Europe and thus on the prospects for it to create revolution.⁵² Chris Brown writes of Marx and Engels's account, "The rights and wrongs of the war, its justice, are never discussed at any length: what counts is whether it makes revolution more or less likely."⁵³ What we are missing in this account, according to Brown, is a linking of this goal to actual conduct.⁵⁴

There is a Marxist stream of literature that dissents from this. Lawrence Wilde's *Marxism's Ethical Thinkers*⁵⁵ argues Marxism can and does provide a stronger ethical imperative. Lukes himself pioneered this project in many ways, distinguishing in his *Marxism and Morality* between two types of ethics: *Recht*, that area of morality concerned with justice, fairness, rights, and obligation, and *emancipation*, that morality which concerned with the abolition of bondage, wage slavery, and exploitation. Lukes's perception is that Marxism's overemphasis

⁵² Eleanor Aveling and Edward Aveling (eds), *Karl Marx: The Eastern Question* (Reprint, London: Cass Reprint of Economic Classics, 1969).

⁵³ Chris Brown, "Marxism and International Ethics," 231.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 234.

⁵⁵ Lawrence Wilde (ed), *Marxism's Ethical Thinkers* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

on this emancipation morality borders on consequentialism and is a serious weakness within the tradition.⁵⁶

This has produced two broad trajectories in Marxist ethics in international relations. The first, the “purist” form of Marxist consequentialism, predicated on the morality of emancipation, and the second, following from Lukes argument that some sort of bridge needs to be built between the morality of *Recht* and of emancipation. In the latter one might cite Frankfurt School influenced critical theory, and in particular the work of Andrew Linklater, who has attempted to do what Lukes himself suggested.⁵⁷

Still others are convinced that such a moral bridge is one of the most potent ethical tools in the hands of international relations theorists encountering a globalized era. Jeffrey Reiman, for example, suggests that the conversation on “justice” and its relationship to capitalism specifically, along with forcing confrontations with ideology, are two critical Marxist contributions to the debate.⁵⁸ Still others agree that a Marxist analysis of global affairs is especially for this time of global capitalism, in which traditional theories have failed to keep the potent forces of global exchange and finance central to their analysis and ethics.⁵⁹ Such an emphasis has synergy with the Liberation theology movement of Latin America. Of course, to what extent liberation theology has adapted Marxism to fit its theology, or adapted its theology to accommodate Marxism is a matter of hot debate.⁶⁰

Purist Marxism itself has been adapted in Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein’s dependency and world-systems literature. Probably the most influential version of Marxist analysis in international relations is the neo-Gramscian school developed by Robert Cox. Cox along with Craig Murphy, for example, have emphasized the normative, reformist aspect of neo-Gramscian literature, though Murphy is critical of those that are *too* reformist (and by extension no longer purely Gramscian or Marxist).⁶¹ Hardt and Negri’s own neo-Marxist

⁵⁶ See Stephen Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*.

⁵⁷ Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 1997).

⁵⁸ Jeffrey Reiman, “Moral philosophy: the critique of capitalism and the problem of ideology” in T. Carver (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 143-167.

⁵⁹ This would include leading Marxist philosophers like G. A. Cohen, as well as Phillipe van Parijs and Kai Nielson. See, for example: Cohen, *Karl Marx’s Theory of History: A Defence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); van Parijs, *Marxism Recycled* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁶⁰ See, for example Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (New York: Maryknoll Press, 1978) and Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and the Theology of Liberation* (New York: Maryknoll Press, 1978).

⁶¹ Craig Murphy, “The promise of critical IR, partially kept” in *Review of International Studies* (2007: 33), 117-133.

commentaries on *Empire* and *The Multitude* bear certain other normative convictions, trying to strengthen Marxism's ethical reach by expanding the conversation to social movements, civic action, and empowerment.⁶²

All of this is much by way of surprise, for a school of thought so thoroughly entrenched in secular materialism and ethical consequentialism. It would be hard not to find a certain resonance with Marxism's contemporary critiques of exchange oriented capitalism and ideological monism. Yet, at the same time it is difficult to imagine in what ways Marxist analysis can find itself clear of the more fundamental assumptions of materialism and consequentialism. Even contemporary Marxist thought shares these derivative assumptions of the modern social imaginary, of an objectified economy, producing consequentialist ethics. It is hard to know, for example, where the content of this new *Recht* arises. Could it be generated, as Nicholas Rengger suggests, from various liberal strains in Marx's early thought? But if in coming to terms with the non-material sources of Marxist ethics, in what way would such ethics any longer be appreciably Marxist? According to Rengger, this may well be the point: "not just to understand Marxism . . . [but] to change it."⁶³

Rengger concludes that, on the whole, the Marxist tradition in all its variety has a "fairly clear mainstream position on ethics – broadly consequentialist, interest based, and naturalistic – but some positions exist that are more sympathetic to versions of the morality of *Recht* on its fairly extensive – and sometimes quite influential – fringes."⁶⁴

4.4.2 The Public Sphere – Pre-Political Instrumentalism

The Marxist public is the proletariat, a pre-political body which instrumentally judges political and social systems on their ability to sustain material, and therefore ultimate, equality. The proletariat authorizes all activity, political and otherwise, only insofar as it provides for the horizontal adjudication of the means of production. The constitution of this public is a very different account from the realist or liberal mind, which imagines autonomous individuals spontaneously contracting for mutual benefit. The Marxist public is,

⁶² Hardt and Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) and *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁶³ Rengger, 198.

⁶⁴ Rengger, 192.

in many respects, a critique of the spontaneous ordering of that economy. It argues primarily that such a spontaneous ordering will never truly produce the equality that a secular, horizontal society demands. Production and its means will always produce hierarchy, and it is that hierarchy that is the focus of Marxism's critique. Where realism seeks to manage the hierarchies of anarchy through egoism and power politics, and liberalism looks to mitigate anarchy through education and development, Marxism's goal is more radical still: ultimate equality, found in the equal distribution of the means of production.

Prior to the political is both the proletariat and the production and consumption of the material world. All politics is derivative of those controls, and the political is essentially in collusion with the hierarchies of the economy. Indeed, more often than not, the political is an engine of the bourgeois, justifying the Marxist emphasis on revolution. If the political is said to have a task, it is not the cosmopolitan pedagogy of liberalism, or even the minimalist security of realism, but the whole erasure of hierarchy and the establishment of horizontal materiality. The spontaneous realization of a common public mind can come only when material factors no longer sustain an implicit hierarchy. Until that time there can be no liberal dream of mutuality and complementarity. There can be no perpetual peace while men are materially unequal.

This common space or public which exists outside the political, authorizing the political, is peculiar to the modern social imaginary. The Marxist economy clearly fosters a latent consequential instrumentalism, but this should not obscure the fact that material, rational individuals constitute a public outside power, which speaks to power. The clearest example of this is the Marxist concession that occasionally material hierarchy is so entrenched into a political system that it must be overwhelmed in revolution, and replaced by the proletariat. That is to say, it is the responsibility of pre-political power to check political power, and its task of horizontal and equal material establishment.

4.4.3 Self-Government – Horizontal Secularity and the Rational Man

While horizontal materiality marks the pre-political Marxist public, it is the scientific rationalism at the heart of Marxism that parallels the modern emphasis on self-government. As in liberalism, Marxism is hostile to ideology and anything which inhibits human kinds

natural, secular freedoms. But unlike liberalism, Marxism believes these ideologies are (solely) materially situated. Thus the revolution is not pedagogical, it is economic, and political only insofar as political structures sustain the controls over the means of production. The scientific man liberated from the vices of a hierarchical economy can experience true freedom.

Just as in Taylor's modern social imaginary, there can be no higher time or people, so Marxism's government is one of direct access. No member of society is privileged over any other, no time is higher, no tradition sacred. What matters is only the immanent materiality of the moment, and what must be done to provide horizontal and (materially) equitable adjudication. Only in this can there be the experience of freedom. The movement of history remains particularly modern, from a vertical world of mediated access to horizontal, direct access societies.

Radical secularity is therefore understood. If the material constitutes the pre-political, then whatever social arrangements, whether religious, social, or political, are constitutive of those material ends. Religion is simply another ideological veneer to mask the modes of production and the power of the privileged. In that religion is almost always hierarchical, that its substance is almost certainly about mediating vertical access to a higher power(s) and that it often teaches codes of conduct, which are not, strictly speaking, scientifically demonstrable, it is a chief object of suspicion. And this does not mean simply a suspicion of sustaining religious institutions of an *ancien regime*. It may begin with the class-based institutions of religious privilege in a society, but it only ends with the final erasure of anything that inhibits the free, direct, and horizontal expression of human society. Directness of access, says Taylor, makes us uniform. And that is one way of making us equal.⁶⁵ It is a particularly modern manner of fashioning equality. Secularity is more than assumed in Marxism, it is actively brought.

Marxism is actually more optimistic about human reason and self-government than liberalism. Marxism's more scientific account posits that **human beings are basically rational, and that basic rationality can be counted on to produce spontaneous harmony, largely because rational beings recognize the mutual benefit of complementary activities**. Marxism is more optimistic than liberalism because it believes that it is essentially only the material environment that can inhibit this harmony. Liberalism leaves room for

⁶⁵ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 160.

education campaigns and cosmopolitan pedagogy, for untrained human faculties to be deceived or ignorant. Marxism believes instead that the first order of freedom concerns the means of production. Rational, equal human beings will respond out of that freedom once it is established. This is why a concept like the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” which worries some observers, is really rather innocuous to the Marxist, who believes that such a dictatorship could not be but equitable. Rational man, with direct access, would make no move for relative gain. Marxist anthropology is, in this sense, possibly the *most* utopian of the modernist theories so far. Its scientific account of human nature makes relative gains unthinkable for materially equal persons, situated in an interlocking order of mutual benefit.

4.5 Social Constructivism and the Modern Social Imaginary

Ian Hurd writes that constructivism means “looking at international relations with an eye open to the social construction of actors, institutions and events . . . [and] beginning from the assumption that how people and states think and behave in world politics is premised on their understanding of the world around them, which includes their own beliefs about the world, the identities they hold about themselves and others.”⁶⁶ In its critique of materialism, its attention to the relationship between structures and agents and its multiple logics of anarchy, social constructivism breaks with the traditions of realism, liberalism, and Marxism. Ian Hurd lists four essential assumptions of social constructivism.⁶⁷

First, that meaning is socially constructed. Alexander Wendt says, “A fundamental principle of constructivist social theory is that people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that objects have for them.”⁶⁸ The task is discerning the webs of meaning and the practices that constitute them. Jeffrey Legro writes, “Ideas are not so much mental as symbolic and organizational; they are embedded not in human brains but also in the ‘collective memories,’ government procedures, educational systems, and the rhetoric of

⁶⁶ Ian Hurd, “Constructivism” in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*, 312-313.

⁶⁷ These are listed by Ian Hurd’s chapter on “Constructivism” in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*, 209-305.

⁶⁸ Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics” in *International Organization* (1992: 46), 396-397.

statecraft.”⁶⁹ For the constructivist, then, expectations, interpretations, *and* beliefs are integral to thinking about international affairs.

Second, this means that state interests are, at base, ideas about needs. The national interest is internally and socially formed. Constructivists often therefore find it helpful to examine the historical construction of national interests.⁷⁰ Other traditions also look at the constitution of national interests,⁷¹ but constructivism specifically emphasizes the social nature of their formation.⁷²

Thirdly, this means that material and social interests, actors, and structures are mutually constitutive. Hurd argues that this is an important contribution because constructivism does not assume a “separation between agents and structure.”⁷³ Depending on the nature and intensity of this conviction, of course, one sees a continuum in the logic of constructivism. This is the distinction between soft and hard social constructivism, whether after persons and societies have invested meaning into a thing, how easy it is to change or unmake that meaning. This is also the debate around the strength of what constructivists call “social facts,” realities that are not naturally given, but are so internalized by persons and societies that they can be treated as basic conditions, as though they were in fact given.

Finally, this means that anarchy is not an objective condition of the international system. It is possible, as Wendt said, that “an anarchy of friends differs from one of enemies.”⁷⁴ What emerges could be an international community,⁷⁵ hierarchy,⁷⁶ rivalry,⁷⁷ or other social relationship. Constructivism has a flexible social and global order.

This thesis adopts an interpretivist methodology, a subsidiary of what Kratochwil calls the social constructivist approach. However, there are several striking differences between

⁶⁹ Jeffrey Lego, *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 6.

⁷⁰ For example, Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca, NT: Cornell University Press, 1996); and Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs about the Use of Force* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); or Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

⁷¹ For example Andrew Moravcsik, a “new liberal.” See for example, “Is there something rotten in the state of Denmark?” in *Journal of European Public Policy* (1999: 6), 669-681.

⁷² Ian Hurd, 303.

⁷³ Ibid, 304.

⁷⁴ Alexander Wendt, “Constructing international politics” in *International Security* (1995: 20), 78.

⁷⁵ E. Adler and M. Barnett, “Security communities in theoretical perspectives” in Adler and Barnett (Eds), *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁷⁶ G. Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁷⁷ Wendt, “Anarchy is what states make of it” in *International Organization* (1992: 46), 391-425.

mainstream social constructivism as a theory of international relations, and social constructivist methodology. Jodok Troy, for example, argues that soft or Christian realists like Scott Thomas and Daniel Philpott often adopt social constructivist approaches. He writes that they “acknowledge the inter-subjectivity of religion and try to analyse religion from the perspective of its potential for peace, as well as its potential for conflict. . . . They tend to favour Constructivist approaches.”⁷⁸ A methodology may be variably applied depending on how it is suited to the matter at hand, and further it usually offers insight into one or another aspect of social reality, rather than claiming to be a whole paradigm to explain social reality. For the purposes of this argument, mainstream social constructivism will be treated as a paradigm or theory of international relations, not in its many methodological manifestations. As an international theory, social constructivism has assumptions about pre-political, increasingly sovereign, persons making and remaking meaning in an intersubjective social reality. It borrows from the same repertory of social forms in the modern social imaginary as realism, liberalism, and Marxism.

4.5.1 The Constructivist Economy and Self-Governing Persons

In *Social Theory of International Politics*, Wendt writes, “Epistemologically I have sided with positivists. . . . On ontology – which is to my mind the more important issue – I will side in subsequent chapters with the post-positivists.”⁷⁹ He describes himself as a positivist, which he defines as having three principles: 1) the world is independent of the mind and language of the observers; 2) mature scientific theories typically refer to this world; 3) even when it is not directly observable.

These assumptions are not necessarily ones with which Hurd and other constructivists would resonate, but it is instructive for the general orientation of the theory. It is worth recalling, for example, that in realism, liberalism, and Marxism, the economy of human society, while predicated on mutuality and exchange, was less flexible. The disposition of persons created certain kinds of systems and structures that were not easily, or ever, changed. Realism’s

⁷⁸ Jodok Troy, *Christian Approaches to International Affairs* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 39-40.

⁷⁹ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 90.

anarchy is fundamental, as is Marxism's materialism, and liberalism's sovereign persons can at best mitigate anarchy, not erase or redefine it.

So social constructivism actually has a more radical emphasis still on sovereignty than liberalism. **There is no meaning to social reality except that which human persons make, and debate is therefore over how easy or hard it is to make or unmake human meaning.** Social sovereignty is extended so that reality no longer even has independent existence apart from the meaning that is provided by persons. All social laws and dynamics, such as they are, are invented by persons for the service of persons and their interests or agendas, however those may be sovereignly constituted. Conditions like anarchy, production, and consumption no longer occur without their directed intervention and invention by persons.

So human persons make what they will of the world, understanding that meanings are not made in a vacuum but in a highly contested space of meanings, by other social groups and persons. **Social reality is then constituted by mutual intersubjectivity, the assumption that persons with the powers of making and unmaking meaning are commensurable interlocutors, constantly producing new meanings** aimed at one or another concept of flourishing.

This modern assumption of social reality, of sovereign persons making meaning and intersubjectively engaging in a kind of ideational anarchy, is said by Hurd to be more methodological than theoretical. However, there is good reason to expect that this assumption carries more than methodological weight. It can be assumed, for example, that in principle horizontal equality is necessary, that any person innately has the sovereign power of the making of social reality in their control, even if in social reality some persons practice more social control than others.

Consider Richard Price's assessment of the constructivist contribution to ethics. He writes that while constructivist scholarship has,

typically sought to demonstrate the existence and importance of the intersubjective, transcommunity (systemic) norms, there is nothing in constructivism itself that inherently privileges cosmopolitan values over communitarian ones as always more just.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Richard Price, "The Ethics of Constructivism" in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, 318.

It may be, as Price notes, that “one person’s cosmopolitan victory might be another’s intolerable encroachment upon the prerogatives of a self-determining cultural community.”⁸¹ But is it true that constructivist theory does not entail “normative commitments of a sort of cosmopolitanism or communitarianism?”⁸²

No. Who, after all, are these self-determining cultural communities, who have now been granted cosmic powers due at one time only to God or nature? Price says that, “Constructivism is agnostic,”⁸³ but if this is so, then it is a kind of agnosticism with a fairly specific perspective on human persons, their powers of agency, and especially their ability to define and redefine social reality that would be foreign, perhaps even blasphemous, in the pre-modern word. It is, in a phrase, a highly secularized agnosticism dependent on the social forms of the modern social imaginary to give it context.

This is not to invalidate social constructivism, but it is to show that social constructivism as a full theory privileges and assumes the social forms of the modern social imaginary. A constructivist theory may strike the observer as a more palatable perspective on international politics, with its emphasis on human autonomy and the dignity of independent thought. Its palatability, of course, may be partly due to its repetition of certain basic social forms of modernity, and especially the priority of the person, his or her powers of making, and the social game of producing meaning together. As Steve Smith writes, such epistemological terrain inevitably prefigures a familiar sort of ontological place⁸⁴: the world of the social constructivist is not, in fact, all that new to a Secular age.

4.5.2 The Pre-Political Public - Intersubjectivity and Self-Government

The pre-political public is the essential component of social constructivism. Whereas in the realist and liberal economy the state is the subject of the public’s pre-political authorization, in social constructivism what the state is, and what environments it operates in, is more porously constituted. **The public is not only pre-political, it is the source of all social**

⁸¹ Price, “The Ethics of Constructivism”, 318.

⁸² Ibid, 320.

⁸³ Ibid, 320.

⁸⁴ Steve Smith, “Wendt’s World” in *Review of International Studies* (26, 2000), 163.

reality. The only constraints on human social activity are other inherited or sustained human social forms.

Among the problems this creates for self-governing persons is that of structure and agency. Where, after all, do these structures and systems come from, if not some form of persons authorizing and making them along the way? Scott Thomas, echoing Charles Taylor, asks “how the intersubjectivity of the social bond between states that constitute an international society is constructed to begin with? Where do the rules, norms and practices in international life come from?”⁸⁵ What is this public that authorizes these concepts and what does it have to be to authorize them?

Taylor argues the public has to be pre-political, and in social constructivism this carries even more weight than in realism or liberalism because what is pre-politically determined is not only political and social life, but the very meaning of all of reality. Absolutely everything, in this sense, is meaning-constructed. Social constructivism does not break the logic of the modern social imaginary’s social forms; it begins to bring self-government to its logical conclusion. The systems and rules that once had their own dynamic, external to if derivative of human nature in the objectified economy, are now mutually constituted to such an extreme extent that they depend on directed human action. The debate internal to social constructivism is not about the source of meaning, which is always sovereign social groups or persons, but about how easily and in what ways persons can break the logic of systems that have been made.

The public does not simply come to a common mind about governance or politics, it comes to invent governance and politics as concepts and practices entirely. No meaning can exist independent of this public power. And since no hierarchical authority is admitted, this power cannot, obviously, be overridden.

So when Scott Thomas asks about the origin of the practices that constitute what Wittgenstein might call the game of international life, he is alerting us that such social or language games, in which rules or norms are constructed to help players get along, may be misleading.⁸⁶ Such questions break down the analogy between games and international politics and what

⁸⁵ Scott Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion*, 93.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 94.

becomes apparent are “the unexamined assumptions of liberal modernity behind social constructivism in international relations theory.”⁸⁷

Richard Price argues that constructivism occupies a middle ethical position, between scepticism and utopianism.⁸⁸ Like Baylis and Smith, Price sees constructivism as a middle ground, a position which argues that meaning is socially constituted, but defers on the substance of that meaning and on the relative “hardness” of that system. Like any middle ground, Price sees constructivism’s singular ethical contribution as that of humility, because constructivism’s ontology is contingent and open to challenge, to making and unmaking.

But as political theologian Hent de Vries has argued, “Optionality in the secular age is hardly an option itself.”⁸⁹ Price calls it “explanatory agnosticism,” which doubled with “social malleability” underscores its humility. Yet if that agnosticism is really about social malleability rooted in a horizontal secularity, it is humility within a defined modern social imaginary. Constructivism may seem agonistic in the game of western international theory, but exported abroad, contrasted with pre-and nonmodern embedded, hierarchical, nonsubjective orders, its markings of the modern social imaginary are plain enough.

4.6 Poststructuralism and the Modern Social Imaginary

International theorists who identify as postmodernists rarely use the term themselves, tending to prefer, according to Peter Lawler and Anthony Burke, the term poststructuralist.⁹⁰ Viewed from the mainstream, argues Lawler, “the hallmarks of postmodern or post-structuralist writing – antifoundationalism, the emphasis on the multiplicity of possible readings or interpretations, and the critique of subjectivity – seemingly rule out a meaningful contribution to debates about . . . international relations.”⁹¹ The charge of impracticality or moral relativism is common, yet, as David Campbell argues, “the overall purpose of a

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ See Richard Price, “The Ethics of Constructivism.”

⁸⁹ Hent de Vries, “The Deep Conditions of Secularity,” *Modern Theology* 26, no. 3 (2010), 391.

⁹⁰ Peter Lawler, “The Ethics of Postmodernism,” and Anthony Burke, “Postmodernism,” in Reus-Smit and Snidal (Eds), *The Oxford Handbook*, 359-378.

⁹¹ Lawler, 378.

poststructuralist analysis is ethical and political.”⁹² Anthony Burke writes that its most powerful and fundamental characteristic is “its systematic denaturalization of the real and the given, with the aim of social critique in the name of some ethical good.”⁹³ The practical input of the poststructural approach is even less systematic than constructivism, but rather lies in reflecting on the political nature of choices that persons make in how to understand and imagine the world. That these choices are political also sustains that agents are responsible, ethically, for making them. Roland Bleiker writes that mainstream theories, by contrast, often obscure the choices persons make about representation. He argues such theories are not so much theories of representation, as theories *against* representation.⁹⁴ How and why persons choose modes of representation is central to poststructuralism.

In making these political and ethical choices of representation in international relations, it is not that such choices cannot be made, it is that they cannot be made definitively. Any definitive claim about an ethical or political position, or one or another mode of representation, would constitute an “annulment of alterity,” or, in other words, it would be an intolerable suppression on subsequent human agency and interpretation. Unlike in social constructivism, where a pre-political public may come to a common mind on the meaning of reality, poststructuralism challenges the “commonness” of such a mind, arguing that no such ultimately inclusive commonness can exist in a world of radically sovereign persons. Intersubjective mutuality will always have extremely uneven participants; some will be more sovereign than others in the game of making meaning. Any ethical and political decision made via social construction will produce flourishing for some, and suppression for others. Poststructuralism is especially attuned to which voices are suppressed, and why. In this way, although not discussed in this thesis, poststructuralism often has certain common causes with postcolonial and feminist approaches.

4.6.1 The Aesthetic Economy

⁹² David Campbell, “Poststructuralism,” Dunne, Kurki, and Smith (Eds), *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 225.

⁹³ Anthony Burke, “Postmodernism,” Reus-Smit and Snidal (Eds), *The Oxford Handbook*, 359.

⁹⁴ Roland Bleiker, “The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory,” *Millennium* 30:3 (2001), 512.

Poststructural thought is more a critical approach than an overall theory itself. Yet despite this, even the approach carries with it certain assumptions that are particular to the late modern world, and to the assumptions of Taylor's modern social imaginary. While poststructuralism implicitly criticizes the subject/object duality in realism, liberalism, and other mainstream theories, it nonetheless affirms an interlocking, intertextual world, in which it is not the material activities of production and consumption, but how those material activities manifest the arrangements and meanings of power that are important. There are laws and dynamics too in the poststructural world, but those laws and dynamics proceed from the constant contestation of interpretation between persons, relative to their positions of social and political power. **Meaning in the world is always made by responsible persons, who are nonetheless also the products of already existing meanings. The world is intersubjective and inter-textual, leading to an anarchy of textual power, where the strong make what meaning they will, and the weak suffer the meanings they must.**

In many respects, the aesthetic economy completes the logic of the devolution and final collapse of pre-modern hierarchy. In realism, liberalism, or Marxism, for example, some order, whether invisible hand or self-interested anarchy, sets rules in motion that sustain a certain mutuality, an order which drives human beings into contract for mutual profit and security. In early modern theory, providential deism imagined an absent but benevolent god which set the clockwork of an economy of mutuality in motion. Later and later modern theory completes the anthropocentric logic of the modern social imaginary, until finally the clock is struck by no god or natural order of history at all, but immanently, moment by moment, order is produced by human persons.

An aesthetic approach is one which not only affirms the social construction of reality, but works to uncover the interests of power and control within that construction. Unlike in other mainstream approaches, including social constructivism, there is no common mind that persons come to. There is instead a kind of intertextual anarchy within which the strong make the meanings they will. No natural order, no higher time, and no higher god can contest these powers. Any such appeal is understood to be a rhetorical strategy, one which would concentrate power in the hands of those who appeal to its hierarchy. In the game of structure and agency, structure may have the short-term upper hand, but agency should always win. Structure has no existence apart from its performed sustenance by the sovereign individuals who authorize it. Again, unlike in Marxism, persons no longer wait for revolution, every

moment is a revolution, where a new interpretation, a new strategy can emerge and win social power, and thereby remake social and political reality.

The aesthetic economy is one where interpretation and reinterpretation spontaneously create. The power of the human being expands exponentially as the world is no longer simply what is made but also what is thought, and how the two interrelate. Power, further, is no longer expressed only in social and political forms but also in the logic of those forms, which penetrates and shapes the very concept of human persons, and their rationality. At its most basic, the aesthetic economy interrogates the space between these forms of representation and what is represented, and what powers and interests manifest to make one form privileged over others.⁹⁵

The expansion of knowledge to knowledge production in the aesthetic economy is central to the ethical and political dilemmas that inform poststructural thought. The political moment is particularly in what David Campbell calls “the manifest consequences of [choosing] one mode of representation over another.”⁹⁶ Theodor Adorno recommends likewise that aesthetic understanding attempts to “address the ideological commitments behind exclusionary epistemologies and to suggest a revised account of knowledge.”⁹⁷ The essence of this economy is perpetual incompleteness; it never ends. Rather it is processual, “a constant vacillation between the material object under consideration and any conceptual understanding of its meaning.”⁹⁸

4.6.2 The Unsettled Self

Jenny Edkins argues that poststructuralism’s basic challenge to international relations is its “unsettling of the subject,” a “realignment and reexamination of subjectivity that leads to a rearticulation of fundamental political questions.”⁹⁹ In many respects, she says, what authors like Slavoj Žižek, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and others have sought is a recovery of

⁹⁵ Bleiker, 510.

⁹⁶ David Campbell, *Writing Security: US Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 35.

⁹⁷ Perm Kumar Rajaram, “Theodor Adorno’s Aesthetic Understanding: An Ethical Moment for IR?” *Alternatives* 27:3 (July-Sept. 2002), 351.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 354.

⁹⁹ Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999), xi. Edkins is cited at length by Lawler in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*.

the political, “the establishment of the very social order which sets out a particular, historically specific account of what counts as politics and defines other areas of social life as *not* politics.”¹⁰⁰ For poststructuralists, the mainstream emphasis of politics, having to do with states, institutions, elections, and so forth, only obscures or conceals the actual political choices already made in the prevailing social world. Furthermore, argues Lawler,

the subject does not exist prior to the formation of any social order but is inextricably bound up with the formative process. Power is productive not only in the formation of specific social orders but also in the formation of subjects: “the individual is not a pregiven entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual with his identity and characteristics is the product of relations of power.”¹⁰¹

His argument is that the modern notion of the autonomous sovereign individual subject is revealed as an invention. In other words, the pre-political moment is not something that passes, but something within which human persons constantly persist. That choice, or those choices, and the responsibility they entail, are all that remains of the sovereignty of persons. But since there is no other power than that of persons, and what they have made, it is still a kind of sovereignty. If, for example, a hierarchical, embedded series of social forms that could correspond to some cosmic or natural law were admitted, it would resolve the unsettled self and, in the view of poststructuralism, essentially end politics. So the human person may be the only meaning-making power that remains, yet those powers are not entirely in their control. It is a broken kind of sovereignty, since autonomy within an anarchy of intertextual criticism can never be complete. Argues Lawler, “We come to know who ‘we’ are only in the context of our relationship to the social world and to the others who populate that world.”¹⁰² Thus Judith Butler asks: “Who ‘am’ I without you?”¹⁰³ Meaning is a game that must be played together, and in poststructuralism, that game can never ultimately be won or lost without destroying politics itself. So the call to these political choices, what is often called “ethics” within the poststructural approach, “is not reducible to specific moments in international political life or a discrete area of academic inquiry but permeates the political itself and, by extension, the activity of political analysis and investigation.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Edkins, 2.

¹⁰¹ Lawler, 381. Citing Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, C. Gordon (Ed), (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), 73-74.

¹⁰² Lawler, 381.

¹⁰³ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), 22.

¹⁰⁴ Lawler, 382.

4.6.3 Pre-Political Perpetuity and Perpetual Suspicion

There is in some sense no such thing as pre-political public in poststructuralism, because everything is pre-political, especially the choices about what does and does not qualify as “politics.” **The pre-political public exists in perpetuity, the meaning of the political and the social are both fundamental to and derivative of human persons.** This is why political philosopher Simon Critchley says that there cannot be a singular ethics, which traditionally denotes singularity and universality, prescribed from poststructuralism.¹⁰⁵ Ethics is essentially the remaining, and perpetual, human choice, and choices must not be restricted. It is not that ethics cannot be proposed, but such ethical choices cannot be made in such a way as to be definitive, to – as Wittgenstein remarks – blow all other ethics away.

This kind of pre-political perpetuity might strike one as profoundly dissatisfying, particularly because it seems unable to rule out or against abuses. David Campbell captures this dissatisfaction when he writes,

We may still be dissatisfied with the prospect that Derrida’s account cannot *rule out forever* perverse calculations and unjust laws. But to aspire to such a guarantee would be to wish for the demise of politics, for it would install a new technology, even if it was a technology that began life with the markings of progressivism and radicalism. Such dissatisfaction, then, is not with a Derridian politics, but with the necessities of politics per se, necessities that can be contested and negotiated, but not escaped or transcended.¹⁰⁶

The poststructural public is not so much about coming to a common mind, any common mind will inevitably be distrusted, but it is about insisting that persons never move far beyond these first, fundamental, choices. It is a distrust of tradition, of order, and of what is dominant and received.

This is why the vigilant, ethical person is so important. Perhaps the best that can be hoped for are ethical choices that are the least oppressive, and suffer the greatest majority the least violence. What compels persons to sustain choices that serve their self-interest is, however, unclear, unless poststructuralism comes back to the logic of an early realism and self-interested persons. Why, for example, it should be true that the meanings that persons have

¹⁰⁵ Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (London, Routledge, 1992), 3.

¹⁰⁶ David Campbell, “The Deterritorialization of Responsibility: Levinas, Derrida, and Ethics After the End of Philosophy,” *Alternatives* 19:4 (Fall 1994), 478.

made, and in turn socialize, are often so violent and repressive remains to be explained in the poststructural approach. Ironically, the exchange of a competitive material world for an intersubjective one does not seem to improve the overall character of human persons, where the strong continue to do what they will, while the weak suffer what they must.

Such an ethics that constantly reexamines first choices is a condition that political theologian Oliver O'Donovan calls "perpetual suspicion." He writes that it is an "eternally inconclusive exchange of historicism: allegations of sectional interest volleyed to and fro across the net, never to be ruled out of court, never to land beyond reach of return."¹⁰⁷ Such suspicion alerts one of the political and social power that underlies choices, "but it does not tell us whether those commitments are good or bad, generous or mean-spirited, true or false. It does not entitle us to think that no theory ever looks beyond the interests of its proponents."¹⁰⁸

Simon Critchley argues that this is in part what Derrida means by his qualified Kierkegaardian emphasis on the madness of decision: that is, that each decision is a leap of faith made in relation to the "singularity of a context."¹⁰⁹ Ethical decisions are made in the self-knowledge that the system is incomplete, unreflexive once incarnated, and dangerously total in a given ethical context. Slavoj Žižek writes,

My reflective awareness of all the circumstances which condition my act can never lead me to act: it cannot explain the fact of the act itself. By endlessly weighing the reasons for and against, I never manage to act – at a certain point I must decide to "strike out blindly."¹¹⁰

That act, says Jenny Edkins, is "without justification, without foundation in knowledge, without guarantee or legitimacy. It cannot be grounded in ontology; it is this 'crack' that gives rise to ethics."¹¹¹ Žižek writes further, "There is ethics – that is to say, an injunction which cannot be grounded in ontology – in so far as there is a crack in the ontological edifice of the universe: at its most elementary, ethics designates fidelity to this crack."¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11.

¹⁰⁸ O'Donovan, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Simon Critchley, *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas and Contemporary French Thought* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), 277.

¹¹⁰ As quoted by Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 141.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² As quoted in Edkins, 141.

Yet Charles Taylor himself argues that there is a great deal of justification for such choices, since no human being ever makes decisions, ethical or otherwise, in an autonomous context. There is no striking out blindly. Nothing is less arbitrary than a person's ethical and political action. "One of the most basic aspirations of human beings," Taylor writes, is "the need to be connected with . . . what they see as good, or of crucial importance, or of fundamental value." This means that in regard to the space offered by our background picture, we are "not . . . able to stop caring where we sit."¹¹³ Taylor suggests, in place of the poststructural admonition of suspicion, fealty to first choices, or first principles, which animate social and political life. Taylor's approach, naturally, suggests a hierarchy of goods, not a surprise for a Catholic thinker. It is instructive for conclusion, however, because few things could seem less amenable to the poststructural approach than the religious, which often decentres human power, while settling identity, and with repetitious trust – in word and ritual – in first principles. The poststructural approach, while critical of many of the received social forms of the modern social imaginary, remains essentially derivative of those same forms.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown by comparative analysis of Taylor's modern social imaginary and mainstream international theory, that the latter is Secular, derivative of the social forms of that imaginary. Each approach has within its basic assumptions a version or versions of the objectified economy, the public, and an often increasingly radical self-government. These forms preclude a serious engagement with rival versions of the religious and the secular, dependent as they are on the modern meanings – like *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism – of secularity dominant in international theory, and in Canadian religious freedom foreign policy.

Absent mainstream theory, the following chapter proposes another approach to explaining the rival versions of the religious and the secular that underlie rival versions of religious freedom. This approach is called political theology, defined as the understandings and practices that

¹¹³ As quoted in Stephen K. White, *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 47.

political actors have about the meaning of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes legitimate political authority.

Chapter 5 – Political theology, the understandings and practices that political actors have about the meaning of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes legitimate political authority

It is often said, for instance, that everyone has a “set of presuppositions” or a “perspective on reality” to bring to a theoretical inquiry. That may be true. But saying such things cannot be the end of the matter. It must at best be the beginning. – Nicholas Wolterstorff¹

5.1 Argument and Structure of the Chapter

The argument so far is that there are two rival versions of the religious and the secular underlying religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy, *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism. Further, these rival versions are often undisclosed in part because the meaning of the religious and the secular, as the inverse of each other, is fundamental to the modern social imaginary, part of a series of social forms, the objectified economy, the public, and the self-government, which depend on this modern, horizontal, and secular understanding of social reality. Indeed, these marks of the modern social imaginary appear also, to varying degrees, in mainstream theoretical approaches in international relations. For this reason, it is unlikely that Secular mainstream approaches will help in the work of disclosing rival versions of the religious and the secular.

This chapter therefore argues for a new approach of a much contested concept, political theology. This thesis defines political theology as **the understandings and practices that political actors have about the meaning of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes legitimate political authority**. Such a definition expands on the more limited definition used by theorists in this chapter, and responds to the demonstrated problem of rival versions of the religious and the secular underlying religious freedom. It contextualizes the meanings of the religious and the secular within the systems of political authority which they generate, as Taylor argues regarding the modern social imaginary.

This definition owes a great deal to work already done within international relations. Political theology, which was once more commonplace in international theory, has been slowly reintroduced into the conversation on international relations since September 11, 2001. Nicolas Guilhot writes that international theory, in the early twentieth century, pointed to a

¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 22.

“theological substratum that once provided an explicit background against which a number of central concepts of IR theory resonated.”² Guilhot argues that the one of the important, and progressive, innovations in the mid-century was the translation of these theological premises “into a structure of the *saeculum*.”³

In one sense, Guilhot is right that the core hypotheses of international theory owe much to these early theorists and their theologies. His point is repeated by others, such as Scott Thomas⁴ and Charles Jones.⁵ In his argument, Jones says that “at some point during the 1950s a change took place as though from sterling to dollar – leaving many Christians trading in secular currency, where formerly agnostics had quite comfortably used religious coinage.”⁶

Jones’s metaphor is instructive, suggesting that religious ideas about authority and politics did not so much disappear, as simply become installed as secular assumptions. The ironic consequence is that where previously this political theological content was advanced as intrinsically contestable, its secularization seemed to foreclose debate on some of the basic commitments, the sort Taylor outlines as fundamental to the modern social imaginary. Secularity, it could be said using Jones’s metaphor, is more an exchange in currency rather than a fundamental interruption of the intellectual and moral economy of the modern social imaginary. New understandings and practices were not introduced by the eclipse of the theological, and its sources in international relations, the understandings and practices of the day were simply rationalized and secularized, installed as neutral assumptions. As Jones argues, this has put the discipline of international relations out of touch with some of its once fundamental sources, and left the discipline trying to buy and sell in political-theological markets with secular coinage. The often contestable, and sometimes religious, roots of the assumptions of the modern social imaginary are repurposed for the discipline as natural or secular, whereas for pre-or nonmodern imaginaries, the political-theological contestation is only too obvious. As Elizabeth Shakman Hurd argues, “defining something called religion and working to exclude it from politics . . . is a political move. It is also a theological one.”⁷ It

² Nicolas Guilhot, “American Katchon” in *Constellations* (Vol. 17, No. 2, 2010), 224.

³ Ibid, 248.

⁴ Scott M. Thomas, “Faith, history and Martin Wight: the role of religion in the historical sociology of the English school of International Relations” in *International Affairs* (77, 4 2011).

⁵ Charles A. Jones, “Christian Realism and the Foundations of the English School” in *International Relations* (2003, 17).

⁶ Ibid, 372.

⁷ Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*, 35.

should come as a surprise to no one, given this, that religious actors sometimes resist the implicit theological moves intrinsic to the modern meanings of the religious and the secular.

One of the solutions in international relations has been to reach back into the twentieth century for theorists and thinkers who operated prior to, or who were deliberately opposed to, this secularizing shift in understandings and practices. Political theology, a term whose history goes back to Varro and a lineage stretching over the centuries,⁸ has been the concept of choice for those attempting to explain the secular and the religious.⁹ One of those early thinkers who is being appealed to in this conversation has been Carl Schmitt.

Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology* (1922) was one of the first, and arguably the most controversial, contemporary articulations of political theology. *Political Theology*, and his famous oft-quoted maxims that "sovereign is he who decides on the exception" and "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts" stand out now as puzzling. But his original task, of challenging the dichotomy of the religious and the secular in modern liberal thought, is one that many of those influenced by his work have taken up, including Leo Strauss, Jacques Derrida, Hannah Arendt, Giorgio Agamben, Antonio Negri, Slavoj Žižek, and others. William Scheuerman has observed that a small cottage industry on Schmitt's influences, especially on Morgenthau, has emerged.¹⁰

Schmitt's reputation suffered from his association with National Socialism during World War II, but his criticisms of liberal modernity remained. Indeed, one need not adopt Schmitt's cure to appreciate his diagnosis. Schmitt's insights for this argument are especially important as they relate to the often theological content that persists in secularized form in international theory, and in what ways the boundaries between the religious and the secular are drawn.

Vendulka Kubáľková's project of international political theology (IPT) is an example of a constructivist approach to the concept in international relations. Kubáľková writes that her approach to international political theology "does not go as far as political theologians claim" but nonetheless can account for the substantive content of religious belief. Kubáľková's

⁸ Graham Ward, "Forward" in Peter Losonczi, Mika Luoma-Aho, and Aakash Singh (Eds), *The Future of Political Theology* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), xii.

⁹ See for example the introduction in the edited volume *The Future of Political Theology*. The success over the last decade of the journal *Political Theology* is also an indication of how many thinkers, both theological and political, find the concept useful.

¹⁰ William E. Scheuerman, "Carl Schmitt and Hans Morgenthau: Realism and Beyond," in Michael C. Williams (Ed.), *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau in International Relations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 87 fn. 2.

approach adds significant value to the approach in this chapter. The social constitution of the religious, and the rules-based framework she uses to analyze the religious, yields a more accurate picture than many mainstream approaches, which often perceive the religious as a veneer for other, underlying, factors. She takes the religious seriously by letting it set its own terms and rules, an important step to explaining rival versions of the religious and the secular. But by creating a framework and a project called international political theology, Kubáľková deliberately contrasts IPT with other sub-disciplines, like IPE. She hopes, therefore, to supplement mainstream approaches, not challenge their basic assumptions as derivative of the kind of Secularity Taylor describes, the modern social imaginary. Her approach has merit, but if political theology is to take Taylor's, and Schmitt's, criticisms seriously, it must also attend to rival meanings of the religious and the secular, not simply install and then analyze these concepts as given.

Daniel Philpott, Monica Toft, and Timothy Shah get the closest to the definition of political theology offered. In their book *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*, they write that political theology is "the set of ideas that a religious actor holds about what is legitimate political authority."¹¹ And further, that "religious actors arrive at their political theologies through reflection upon their religion's texts and traditions and its foundational claims about divine being(s), time, eternity, salvation, morality and revelation."¹²

This is a good definition, as far as it goes, but what it misses, like Kubáľková, is the meanings of the religious and the secular, which make this definition intelligible. Who counts, for example, as a religious actor, or what counts as religious and what as secular, and why? Even in *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism there is debate over these boundaries, and certainly so in pre-and nonmodern social imaginaries. If the definition of the religious and the secular is itself both a political and a theological statement, then any political-theological approach must clearly also study this demarcation, the practices and understandings it makes possible, and what therefore constitutes legitimate political authority. Legitimate political authority depends not only on what kind of perspectives are admissible (religious versus secular), but also on which perspectives count as belonging to each of those categories, and why. Therefore the argument is finally for a definition, informed through critique of Schmitt, Kubáľková, Philpott, Toft, and Shah, of political theology as: **the understandings and**

¹¹ Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, Timothy Samuel Shah, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (W.W. Norton: New York and London, 2011), 27.

¹² *Ibid.*

practices that political actors have about the meaning of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes legitimate political authority.

5.2 Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology*

Carl Schmitt, the famous jurist from the Weimar Republic, was a tragic intellectual whose legacy remains tarnished by his National Socialist politics. Yet in the years before and after the war, he provided some of the most insightful political theory. Schmitt called this political theology, although most theologians would undoubtedly be perplexed to find very little of actual theological substance in either *Political Theology* or *Political Theology II*, the latter of which he intentionally tried to make more “theological.”

The term itself seems an alien imposition to political thought. And if by it Schmitt only meant to argue, as Nicolas Guilhot and others have conceded, that a theological background to international theory once existed, then there may not be much more to the term than intellectual nostalgia. As Schmitt legal scholar Paul Kahn writes, “that political concepts have their origin in theological concepts is, to most contemporary theorists, about as interesting and important as learning that English words have their origin in old Norse.”¹³

Schmitt writes famously in *Political Theology*:

All signification concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development – in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver – but also because of their systemic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts.¹⁴

The burden, then, is to suggest that what was true for Schmitt, or at least what he deemed to be true, that this theological substratum still had some kind of relevance, is also true for us, even over the ensuing decades of secularization. Writes Kahn: “political theology as a form

¹³ Paul Kahn, *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 3.

¹⁴ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Translated by George Schwab. Foreword by Tracey B. Strong (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 36.

of inquiry is compelling only to the degree that it helps us recognize that our political practices remain embedded in forms of belief and practice that touch upon the sacred.”¹⁵

Since Schmitt wrote his treatise, there has been a shift in not only the academy, but the culture of secular societies like Canada. Theology is no longer a mainstream academic discipline, and it is no longer obvious why it is important in any kind of significant way to other disciplines of reflection. It is often taken for granted that theology is an intrinsically different subject to which rules of revelation, rather than rationality, apply.

To complicate political theology further still, Schmitt’s original treatises suffer enormously from their obscurity. There are the usual issues with historically situated material, but Schmitt spends a great deal of time responding to ideas and theorists which have long since passed from the conversation. It is, as Paul Kahn says, “a virtually impenetrable consideration of lost German theoreticians.”¹⁶ Further, their work responding to and building a solution for the crisis of the Weimar Republic could hardly not go into history as one of its more spectacular failures. Lost jurists, using lost concepts, debating lost republics seems an exercise in obscurity, not contemporary international theory.

There is also the problem that Schmitt’s use of theology would upset actual theologians. His first argument, from *Political Theology*, is remarkable in part for its utter lack theology. As a result, he takes his task in *Political Theology II* to be a correction of this. Though while this debate is more deliberately theological, it tends to read more as an extended debate, and one with rather petty moments, against his once-friend German theologian Eric Peterson. Peterson’s argument is that “political theology is theologically impossible for Christians, because the Trinitarian dogma does not allow a correlation between a political reality and a theological belief.”¹⁷ Schmitt’s response, and one with which this thesis resonates, is that the political distinction of the religious from the secular is special to modernity, and of intrinsic interest to Christians because it has both political and theological effect on what counts as religious, and what doesn’t. Schmitt argues that this distinction also serves to obscure the often religious sources of the secular, including aspects of the nation-state, and its powers of life and death.

¹⁵ Paul Kahn, 3.

¹⁶ For an anthology of some of these writers in translation, see Arthur Jacobson and Bernhard Schlink, *Weimer: A Jurisprudence of Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

¹⁷ Carl Schmitt, “Editors Introduction”, in *Political Theology II: The Myth of the Closure of any Political Theology*. Translated by Michael Hoelzl. Foreword by Graham Ward (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 9.

Schmitt's definition of theology is therefore somewhat synonymous with the religious itself, or metaphysics.¹⁸ There is a lack of dogmatic or moral questions. By political theology, Schmitt means a historical "sociology of juridical concepts," one which discloses the contestable, and once theological nature of those same concepts.¹⁹ Schmitt's conviction was that powerful theological concepts lived on in the secular state, though naturalized now under the category of secular rationality.

It is important to recognize that despite this conviction, Schmitt was not nostalgic. Contrary to the expectation that a theological, or political theological, analysis would be a simple restatement of a divine substratum ignored or neglected, Schmitt had no desire to return to Christendom or resurrect theocracy. This is not what he meant by political theology.

In her Foreword to Schmitt's *Political Theology*, Tracey Strong writes:

To say that all concepts in modern state theory are secularized theological concepts is not to want to restore to those concepts a theological dimension, but it is to point to the fact that what has been lost since the sixteenth ("theological") century has amounted to a hollowing-out of political concepts.²⁰

For his own part, Nicolas Guilhot argues:

It is important to emphasize that Schmitt does not advocate a re-theologization of politics: rather, he defends the autonomy of the political, but also warns that this autonomy is premised on the historical constitution of a territorial order distinct from, *but coexisting with*, the moral order embodied by the ecclesial institutions of Christianity. Should secularization proceed to the extent that the state no longer understands itself in relation to (and in tension with) this background and conflates its own interests with morality itself – as in the case of liberalism – then it would assume against religious attributes and give rise to dangerous political regimes. By the same token, it would cease to act politically. The end product of secular modernity, in fact, is a state that is unable to prevent its own collapse.²¹

The danger that Schmitt is alerting his reader to here is, in fact, the kind of problem seen emerging in *laïcité*, a political regime whose task is taken to guard itself from a religious intrusion into not only the political, but also the public square. Judeo-Christian secularism, for its part affirming the secular/religious divide, may at least draw deliberate attention to the once-theological concepts that animate a liberal democracy, but it also insists that one need

¹⁸ Ibid, 5.

¹⁹ Ibid, 6-7.

²⁰ Tracey Strong, "Foreword" in Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology*, xxiv.

²¹ Nicolas Guilhot, 234.

not be especially Jewish or Christian to appreciate and embrace their inheritance. Should a person wish to be, this is certainly within his or her right, but it is not essential, and furthermore it should certainly not impinge on the political except insofar as it relates to bolstering already established values of secularity.

Schmitt, then, gives an essential argument for any definition of political theology, that its work must be not only to disclose the religious ideas of religious actors, but also the once religious ideas that have in fact shaped what is known now as the secular. This includes, importantly, how those boundaries between the religious and the secular are constituted to begin with, and how their placement justifies certain kinds of politics, and invalidates others. This parallels Paul Khan's argument that political theology "raises fundamental questions about the nature of contemporary experience and of the place of the political . . . It brings to that inquiry a set of concepts – faith, sacrifice, the sacred – that are ordinarily excluded from political theory."²² It helps explain, to paraphrase William Cavanaugh, why certain experiences, like killing for the state, are honourable, courageous, and praiseworthy, while killing and dying for one's God is fundamentalist, cowardly, and pathological. By studying the meaning of the religious and the secular, and especially which practices and understandings have been naturalized as which, Schmitt's analysis suggests that a better picture can in fact be rendered not only of nonmodern imaginaries, but also of the modern social imaginary itself.

5.3 Vendulka Kubálková, International Political Theology (IPT)

Vendulka Kubálková's proposal for an international political theology (IPT) is one of the more sustained interventions in international relations using Schmitt's term. Kubálková, however, passes over Schmitt's legacy quickly, anxious as she is to enlist it to Nicolas Onuf's project of social constructivism.

To begin with, Kubálková proposes an international political theology paralleled on the same disciplinary model as international political economy. It was not long ago, she recalls, that material and economic forces in international politics were eclipsed by the dominant

²² Paul Kahn, 8.

theoretical approaches, which privileged power and anarchy rather than the constituent material forces that often prefigure these relationships. Into this confusion came the work of IPE, a conversation focused on understanding the relationship between the growing global power of markets and market economies and the political structures of the day. The example of IPE, then, is of a subfield grown out of an observed gap in analysis. To Kubáľková, the surprise of religion and culture in international relations is an oversight of the same kind. It too can be corrected with an internal subdiscipline focused on the overlooked interrelationship of religion and politics.

Her use of the term theology, she says, is intended “deliberately to shock.”²³ But she also says it “does not go as far as political theologians’ claim that political theorizing should have its ultimate ground in religious revelations.”²⁴

Kubáľková is critical of mainstream approaches to religion in international theory, which she claims merely replicate the modern meanings of the religious and the secular. She writes that “within these positivist, materialist, and state-centric constraints, the mainstream by definition cannot theorize religion in IR.”²⁵ That claim is certainly consistent with the argument of this thesis.

Her own brief history of the problem of secularism in international theory does some of the same work Charles Jones and Scott Thomas have done in other places, namely pointing to the once understood theological substratum of theories of international politics.²⁶ Interestingly, after largely dismissing mainstream international theory as having a useful approach to the religious and the secular, she spends most of her time critiquing postmodern theories, emphasizing the theological roots of its methods of phenomenology and hermeneutics. She argues that these theories, often described as anti-foundationalist, owe a debt to religious discourse, which is a bit ironic, suggesting as Schmitt has, that the secular may owe some of its more important content to the religious.²⁷

²³ Vendulka Kubáľková, “Toward an International Political Theology” in Pavlos Hatzopoulos and Fabio Petito, (eds.), *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*. Culture and Religion in International Relations (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 80.

²⁴ Ibid, 80.

²⁵ Ibid, 81.

²⁶ Ibid, 84-86.

²⁷ Ibid, 84. For more on this conversation see, for example, Scott Thomas “Living Critically and 'Living Faithfully' in a Global Age: Justice, Emancipation, and the Political Theology of International Relations” in *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* (2010 39), 505.

Kubáľková recognizes the difficulty in providing definition to the religious. She argues that the meaning of religion itself has basically been lost for analytical purposes, but that religions on the other hand, as institutions within the understandings and practices of the modern social imaginary, can be usefully analyzed by the approaches within that same imaginary. The problem for international theory, she says, is when scholars want to come to terms with the nonmodern religious, or with the fundamental assumptions of their own version of the religious and the secular. Here, she says, it is

infeasible to discuss religion in IR without appreciating that the difference in religious and secular thought is ontological, that is, in what in each of them “counts for real.” All spiritual communities, all religions, Western and Eastern, share a distinction between ordinary and transcendental reality. . . . A serious consideration of the role of religion in IR must start with the exploration of the ontological foundation of religious discourse.²⁸

On the one hand, Kubáľková is echoing Taylor’s argument that there is indeed a difference between the religious and the secular, but on the other she is missing a key argument of his. Mainly, that while it may be so that Western and Eastern traditions share a distinction between ordinary and transcendental reality, what is at stake is how those distinctions are drawn, and why the concepts of the religious and secular came to be used to demarcate them. By exploring “the ontological foundations of religious discourse,” she is assuming that discourse, and its ontologies, in a modern way. The religious has not been, and is not today, always so. Schmitt would extend the argument even further, arguing that sometimes understandings and practices which *begin* as transcendental – or religious – ones, are then installed as ordinary. This, he says, has been the case with certain aspects of the modern state, and this, indeed, is the argument of Charles Jones, Scott Thomas, William Cavanaugh, and others. What is of special importance to international theory is not only that there is such a distinction, but how those distinctions are made, what understandings and practices fall on either side, and how that shapes political legitimacy.

Her definition of religion also fails to recognize that the fundamental constitution of the religious and the secular is intrinsic to political theology. By religion, she means:

1. A system of rules (mainly instruction rules) and related practices, which act to
2. Explain the meaning of existence, including identity ideas about self, and one’s position in the world,

²⁸ Kubáľková, 87.

3. Thus motivating and guiding the behaviour of those who accept the validity of these rules on faith and who internalize them fully.²⁹

This definition could fit in place for worldview, or theory, or almost any image of the good life. What quality about Kubáľková's rules makes them religious? Could not ethnic, national, or even secular identities be religious? And if so, then what meaning or use does the distinction between the religious and the secular any longer have?

What Kubáľková misses is that the concepts of the religious and the secular underwent a major shift in the modern period, and that this shift means that modern religion's "ontological foundations" are very different from pre-modern and nonmodern religion. A rules based, constructivist system may function somewhat to explain the religious in a modern society, but it will fail to account for the rival versions of the religious and the secular in pre-and nonmodern societies. Further, it will also obscure implicit rivalries that still exist in certain modern societies, like the Canadian case, between laïcité and Judeo-Christian secularism.

This problem is instructive because a subfield of international political theology in a discipline largely derivative in some form of the modern social imaginary, will serve to obscure rather than disclose the rival meanings of the religious and the secular intrinsic to that imaginary. Kubáľková adds an important argument, like Schmitt, that certain concepts and ideas do indeed have a religious background, but unlike Schmitt she fails to disclose the rival versions, and rival histories, of the religious and the secular that underlie international theory and Canadian foreign policy. Her constructivist model undoubtedly has use, but only within a context that follows the rules of modernity and its meanings of the religious and the secular.

5.4 *God's Century*

God's Century offers one of the clearest, most focused interventions on religion and foreign affairs in international relations. Its authors, Daniel Philpott, Monica Toft, and Timothy Shah are working in respected schools, Notre Dame, Harvard (at the time, now Oxford), and

²⁹ Ibid, 93-94.

Georgetown, and they are each widely regarded as scholars and teachers in their own right. The book has been met with great acclaim if partly for that reason.

But the book does a great deal more than simply paraphrase the debate to this point. In fact, its most interesting contribution is how quickly it moves beyond the secularization debate. The global resurgence of religion is taken as understood backdrop, not hypothesis, to the argument. Philpott, Toft, and Shah rush past this resurgence and move very quickly to their two core theses. These are:

1. That a dramatic and worldwide increase in the political influence of religion has occurred in roughly the past forty years.
2. The great political variety among religions can be explained by what they call political theology, the set of ideas that a religious community holds about political authority and justice; and as corollary the mutual independence of religious and political authority can point toward a progressive or regressive relationship between political and religious communities.

They define the religious as:

By definition seek[ing] understanding of, and harmony with, the widest reaches of transcendent reality – the quality that distinguishes them from political ideologies such as Marxism or secular nationalism that are sometimes thought to be functionally equivalent to religion. Religions offer answers to universal questions about the origins of existence, the afterlife, and realities that transcend humanity; nations generally do not.³⁰

There is nothing especially controversial about this definition, and *God's Century* moves past its meaning quite quickly. It is the definition this thesis uses. It usefully gives real content to the religious, while not necessarily suggesting that content does not have wider political and social implications. Indeed, something that gives answer to universal questions and realities that transcend humanity would seem, in some fashion, to have fairly radical political and social consequences. Their definition is a good one, then, which offers the possibility of what Schmitt, Guilhot, and others call the theological substratum that resonates underneath key concepts in international theory and politics.

Political theology itself, they say is “the set of ideas that a religious actor holds about what is legitimate political authority.”³¹ And further, that “religious actors arrive at their political

³⁰ Toft, Philpott, Shah, 21.

³¹ Toft, Philpott, Shah, 27.

theologies through reflection upon their religion's texts and traditions and its foundational claims about divine being(s), time, eternity, salvation, morality and revelation."³²

This is helpful so far as it goes. Political theology defined as what religious persons or communities do, on reflection of their basic convictions, and how they translate to political and social life is a real and important contribution to the work of international theory and religion and politics generally.

Yet this is a somewhat different definition of political theology than either its Schmittian heritage or the constructivist project of Kubáľková. Like Schmitt, *God's Century* argues that religious ideas do have political consequences, and often important ones. It is not likely, in fact they argue that in the new global politics it is probably impossible, to insist on a social separation between the religious and the secular, at least insofar as the one is private and the other political and public. Like Kubáľková they believe those ideas can, if understood properly, form a different picture or set of rules of political and social life, about what constitutes legitimacy. Unlike Kubáľková, they do not think that political theology would necessarily function well as a subfield in mainstream disciplines, at least not without a major overhaul of some of the assumptions of those theoretical traditions. But further, unlike Schmitt, and Taylor, this definition of political theology misses out on two extremely important parts of the religious problem.

First, its exclusive emphasis on ideas undermines the often embedded form that religious practices take, and the meanings that are carried with them. As Taylor says, "If an understanding makes a practice possible, it is also true that it is the practice that largely carries the understanding."³³ Religious practices are not secondary to religious ideas, as though the ideas produce the practice in a straightforward, causal manner. The modern social imaginary is not just a set of ideas, it is a set of social forms, forms that embed understandings within practices. This argument is not only academic, because when it comes to questions of religious freedom, ideas can be internal and free for actors in the way in which communal practices may not. In fact, religious freedom in some Islamic contexts, like Pakistan, Afghanistan, and others, is often affirmed as simply the freedom of private belief, while the public manifestations and political consequences of religious traditions other than

³² Ibid.

³³ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 25.

Islam are harshly suppressed. This suppression, especially via blasphemy and apostasy laws, is what Bhatti gave his life fighting against.

Taylor's modern social imaginary gives a more abstract answer to the problem of ideas, on the one hand, and practices on the other, arguing that these are in fact more often mutually constitutive. This matters for defining the religious, and political, theology, because when talking about its freedoms, it is not only the freedom of belief, but the freedom of practice that is most often at stake. Take, for example, the work of Saba Mahmood on the Islamic piety movement in Egypt. Her findings lead her to argue against the dominant understanding of religion,

that regards religion as a set of beliefs expressed in a set of propositions to which an individual gives assent. While this privatized and individualized concept of religion has a Protestant genealogy, it has come to command a normative force in modernity and is often upheld as the measure against which the adequacy of other religious traditions is measured and judged.³⁴

What Mahmood calls the Protestant conception of religiosity, that which “presupposes a distinction between a privatized interiority that is the proper locus of belief and a public exteriority that is an expression of this belief”³⁵ is part of what this thesis refers to as the modern conception. Contrary to this, she argues that the subjects of her study posit a very different relationship between outward bodily acts (including rituals, liturgies, and worship) and inward belief (state of the soul): “not only are the two inseparable in their conception, but, more importantly, belief is the product of outward practices, rituals, and acts of worship rather than simply an expression of them.”³⁶ Her anthropological work with the women's pietism movement in Islamic Egypt sustained this argument. She argues that the veil, for example, is not merely a public manifestation of belief, but a productive act that makes a certain sort of person. She concludes, “Outward bodily gestures and acts (such as *salāt* or wearing the veil) are indispensable aspects of the pious self in two senses: first, in the sense that the self can acquire its particular form only through the performance of precise bodily enactments; and second in the sense that the prescribed bodily forms are necessary attributes of the self.”³⁷ As shown by Taylor and Mahmood, it is therefore especially important when

³⁴ Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, second edition, 2012), xiii.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, xv.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, xv.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 133.

defining the meaning of the religious and the secular that not only ideas, but also practices are studied.

Second, while it may be implied, it is not clear that included in the ideas that religious communities have about justice and authority are also the very meaning and constitution of the religious and the secular. It could be argued that any concept of legitimacy must imply consensus on the meaning of the terms that lead to it, but the problem remains because the meanings of the religious and the secular are not, in fact, only in the power of religious communities and actors. This is the long point that Elizabeth Shakman Hurd makes in *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*. The demarcation of what qualifies as religious and what qualifies as secular is both a political and a theological statement. The limiting and definition of one has an implicit effect on the other, where these are understood to be defined as oppositional.

God's Century, in fact, leaves absent conversation on the secular, though it discusses secularization, as a process, at greater length. The argument has been made that underlying rival versions of religious freedoms are rival versions of the religious and the secular, the most dominant of which are *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, both of which qualify one as the inverse of the other. What is religious is not secular, what is secular is not religious, and so forth. However, it is where and why the boundary between the religious and the secular is drawn that is so important for what makes for political legitimacy. Taylor's argument in *A Secular Age* is that those boundaries were fundamentally altered in the modern period, and that this alteration of the religious and the secular has produced unique social forms and understandings of the political. It is his argument that those forms and understandings have now become so fundamental to modern life that they are often undisclosed.

This makes for the most controversial claim of this thesis: if the secular and the religious, defined as oppositional, are fundamental to the modern social imaginary, and its social forms and understandings of the political are thereby derivative, then it is not only religious actors that have a political theology. If it is accepted that *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism are both manifestations of this modern settlement that regards the religious and the secular as inverse of one another, then it must be accepted that any work to politically define the secular, is also a work to theologically define the religious. This means that political theology is not just a set of ideas that religious actors or communities have about what constitutes

religious authority, it must also include the practices and understandings that *political* actors or communities have about what constitutes the religious and the secular to begin with. Political theology cannot skip this first fundamental question, because it is only after those definitions are rendered that an intelligible picture of political legitimacy can be given. This is very important to even dominantly secularist accounts, like *laïcité*, which are concerned to keep the religious from overwriting politics. That special concern means laicists must attend carefully not only to secular politics, but also to the religious, where and how it is operating, and what sorts of activities are appropriate in a secular society.

This argument can be made without invalidating the claims of *God's Century*, which are important. Religious communities certainly do reflect upon their traditions and practices, and translate those basic theological claims into political ideals and programs, and the study of that process is the work of political theology. But it is also true that what qualifies as a religious text, tradition, or foundational claim has changed in the modern period, that – as Schmitt argues – “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts.” The defense of those concepts, now understood as a secular project, were once part of a series of theological claims, about global order, its objectified economy, the public, human society and sociology, and self-government. Laicists and Judeo-Christian secularists, then, may be defending what is now called a secular order, but it would not always have appeared so. At one time, their defense would have been called a very specific political-theological order, with definite, contestable, understandings and practices. By installing these concepts as secular, Taylor, Hurd, Thomas, and others argue, Secular claims on social and political life often go undisclosed and uncontested. This creates major problems, foremost among them the religious problem with religious freedom, the rival versions of the religious and the secular that continue to underlie Canadian foreign policy, like *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, which despite their disagreements represent a kind of modern consensus on the religious as the inverse of the secular. This tension is manifest in debates over the Canadian Office of Religious Freedom, though it is suggestive of a far more radical tension that may take place in other, nonmodern imaginaries, in societies that are struggling to make, or not to make, this same political-theological consensus.

Paul Khan's longer and more controversial argument is that the modern shift in the meaning of the secular and religious actually installed several extremely important religious ideas at the basis of the secular nation-state. He says, “Political theology argues that secularization, as the displacement of the sacred from the world of experience, never won, even though the

church may have lost. The politics of the modern nation-state indeed rejected the church but simultaneously offered a new site of sacred experience.”³⁸ In some ways this is a paraphrase of Scott Thomas’s argument that we are witnessing not a “clash of civilizations” in global politics, but a “clash of rival apostasies.”³⁹ By this, he means that religious ideas have indeed been installed and secularized at the basis of the nation-state, and that the very meaning of the religious and the secular is part of that basic installation, and so what qualifies some once-religious ideas – he calls them apostasies – as now being secular. Khan writes, “It is an accident of history that the struggle of the state to free itself of the church was framed not as a conflict of faiths but as a conflict over the place of faith in the organization of political power.”⁴⁰ Suggestive as this argument is, this thesis cannot make it, except to sustain that defining the religious and the secular, and its derivative social forms is indeed, as Hurd argues, both a political and a theological act, in an age in which the secular and the religious are understood as oppositional.

Toft, Philpott, and Shah have written an important argument about political theology, which advances the argument of Schmitt, Kubáľková, and others in an important way. But they have also neglected the prior question about the nature of the religious and the secular to begin with, why its boundaries are organized the way that they are, and what sorts of political understandings and practices this makes possible. Their definition of political theology would prove most useful within societies that share the basic settlements of the religious and the secular of the modern social imaginary, but in societies that do not share – or are explicitly opposed to – this settlement, such a definition of political theology might well confuse, rather than illumine. Political theology must be self-critical if it is to be global. It must render meanings of not only the religious, but also the secular, at home and abroad, if the rival versions of the religious and the secular that underlie debates over religious freedom are to be disclosed and debated.

5.5 Political Theology, a definition

³⁸ Paul Kahn, 26.

³⁹ Scott Thomas, “Response: Reading Religion Rightly – The “Clash of Rival Apostasies” amidst the Global Resurgence of Religion,” Chaplin and Joustra (Eds), *God and Global Order*, 187-203.

⁴⁰ Paul Khan, 23.

The question for political theology this thesis is interested in is this: Can political theology clarify rival versions of the religious and the secular underlying religious freedom? The argument so far is that this binary shift in the religious and the secular in the modern West, one as opposite the other, is fundamental to *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, and therefore is a source of major confusion when it comes to explaining the variation in how a state, specifically Canada, understands and applies religious freedom. Further, that what is called religious and what is called secular has therefore not always been consistently so, and that naming some concepts one or the other changes not only understandings but also practices, as in the social forms of the social imaginary. The political theological approach of Schmitt, Kubáľková, Toft, Philpott, and Shah does begin to answer some of these questions, but is incomplete in at least two important respects. First, there is an overemphasis on religious ideas, as opposed to practices, which often carry the ideas themselves, as Taylor has shown. Second, something with which at least Schmitt would agree, it is not enough to talk about how religious ideas and practices constitutes political legitimacy; we must also talk about how defining the religious and the secular to begin with constitutes an important source of political legitimacy. It is not only the content of the religious and the secular, but how and why those lines are drawn that is significant to political legitimacy.

This section lays out a definition that borrows, with critical appreciation, from the thinkers in this chapter. The definition of political theology advanced is **the understandings and practices that political actors have about the meaning of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes legitimate political authority**. This definition is explained in four parts.

First, an argument has already been made for understandings and practices, rather than only ideas, especially as it relates to the religious and its freedoms. In *God's Century*, part of the burden of the authors is to demonstrate that religious convictions are not merely manifestations of other material forces, so they argue at some length for the autonomous nature of religious beliefs and ideas. They write, “To claim that political theology reflects the political activities that religious actors undertake is to claim that religious belief is powerful, autonomous, and not simply the by-product of nonreligious factors. Ideas shape politics.”⁴¹ This is important and true as far as it goes, since, as they argue, one of the chief complaints of religious actors engaging with mainstream international theory is the assumption that the

⁴¹ Toft, Philpott, and Shah, 29.

religious is either irrelevant, as in realism, or a manifestation of ideologically self-interested materialism, as in Marxism and some variations of liberalism. Either way religion is rarely taken on its own terms, as though the ideas and beliefs intrinsic to it are of actual, cosmic importance. *God's Century* wants to take those claims seriously, and so it emphasizes the autonomous ideational nature of religion. However, it need not be argued that the religious is a secondary or tertiary series of beliefs or communities in order to say that its practices are also fundamental to its beliefs. As shown in the well-recognized work of Saba Mahmood, it can be the case that while understandings do enable certain practices, it is also true that certain practices carry the understandings themselves. In her Aristotelian logic, repeated habits can make certain understandings in persons. This too is Taylor's argument when he says that the modern social imaginary cannot be only summarized as a series of beliefs, but is actually embedded in important social forms. Taylor says that "such understanding is both factual and normative; that is, we have a sense of how things usually go, but this is interwoven with an idea of how they ought to go, of what missteps would invalidate the practice."⁴²

So it can be suggested that religion is its own factor, has its own meaning, independent of being derivative of material, or ideological forces, while at the same time saying that the religious is as much a practice, a way of life, as it is a set of beliefs or doctrines. The question, then, becomes not whether the religious should be considered as a serious factor in international politics, but what practices, and what understanding qualify as religious, why, and what effects these have on political legitimacy. Given Philpott's own work on the meaning of the religious, and that this argument parallels in many respects this work,⁴³ this amendment to the definition of political theology can probably be considered a friendly.

Secondly, a major modification in this definition to that offered by Toft, Philpott, and Shah is referring to political actors, not just religious actors. To say that, for example, political actors generally, not just religious ones, have certain political theological assumptions that merit, even require, study is a significant claim. It is a claim that *God's Century* does not necessarily agree with, but it is one that is necessary if political theology is to usefully explain the rival versions of the religious and the secular in Canadian foreign policy. Laïcité and Judeo-Christian secularism are explicitly not ideas held by only religious actors. In fact, they are

⁴² Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 24.

⁴³ See especially Daniel Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations," *World Politics* 55 (October 2002), 66-95.

models of secularity that are supposed to deliberately foreclose on religious actors, or at least the religious ideas of religious actors, being engaged in political life. In both cases, religious actors promoting religious ideas in politics is specifically illegitimate. What is essential to recognize is that this definition of the religious and the secular, defined oppositionally, is not only a political decision, it is also a theological one. The prohibition against religious actors promoting religious ideas with political consequences not only creates a specific kind of meaning for the secular, but also creates a special kind of boundary for the religious. It changes persons and communities' religious experience and powers, and it does so in a specifically modern way. This is not the preamble for theocracy, indeed scholars may be satisfied enough, as many are, with the boundaries that exist between the religious and the secular in the modern social imaginary, but by ordering these boundaries in this way, specific things are said about both the religious and the secular and what constitutes political legitimacy. The very assumption that a theocracy is totally illegitimate in the modern social imaginary deserves explanation, an explanation that cannot be given without appealing to the modern meanings of the religious and the secular, and why those meanings are preferable. Not only theocracy, but even rival versions of the religious and the secular in modern democracy, *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, are hard to adjudicate without deliberately engaging the understandings and practices that political actors, not just religious ones, have about their meanings. Therefore for political theology to serve as an approach that in fact is capable of disclosing rival versions of the religious and the secular underlying religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy, it must be self-critical, and it must include the ideas that also non-religious actors have about the meanings of the religious and the secular.

Third, this definition differs by asking after the meanings of the concepts themselves, not only the effects that one of them, the religious, has on political legitimacy. This is an extension, not a disagreement with what Toft, Philpott, and Shah are arguing. It is true that religious actors have ideas that help constitute what is and is not politically legitimate, but it is also true that who qualifies as a religious actor, and what qualifies as a religious idea, have shifted over time. Schmitt, for his part, argues at great length that the modern state is made possible by a variety of once theological ideas. Early Christian Realists, like Martin Wight, Herbert Butterfield, Reinhold Niebuhr, and others argued in a similarly plain fashion, debating the nature of the state and of the person theologically, not just in secular terms. Taylor's summative social forms of the modern social imaginary, the objectified economy, the pre-political public, and an increasingly radical self-government, are all understandings

and practices that depend on revolutions in not only secular thought, but also in theological thought.⁴⁴ These forms depend on a specific separation of the religious and the secular, on the optionality of religion, and the horizontal neutrality of the secular. The meaning of the religious and the secular is therefore not incidental to, but fundamental for the concept of political legitimacy, especially in the Canadian case. Laïcité and Judeo-Christian secularism both depend on drawing these boundaries as a significant safeguard of the modern polity. To ignore that these meanings have shifted from time to time, and to normalize their meanings, would be to leave unaccounted rival versions within Canadian religious freedom policy abroad.

Finally, the legitimacy of political authority depends not only on the meaning of the religious and the secular, but also on the interrelationship of secular and religious authority. This is consistent with Toft, Philpott, and Shah's definition, but by adding in the meanings of the religious and the secular, what can be studied is not only how legitimacy is shaped by the religious and secular actors, but also how the meanings of the concepts themselves shape legitimacy. What is at stake, therefore, is not simply how these concepts are defined, but also how the secular and the religious are imagined to be able to interrelate on that basis. This gets precisely at the rival versions of the religious and the secular in laïcité and Judeo-Christian secularism. Under this definition of political theology, what can be seen is that both have similar definitions of the religious and the secular, as discrete and private on the one hand, and public and rational on the other. However, when one looks at both the meanings *and* what constitutes legitimate political authority, what can be seen is that laïcité absolutely denies the religious as a useful political entity, while at the same time, Judeo-Christian secularism sees religious authority as serving as a critical buttress for political authority. Therein lies the rivalry.

Consider the puzzle as originally formed: Is it possible to explain the variation in how religious freedom is understood and applied in Canadian foreign relations? Apparent rivalries exist in the debate over the Office of Religious Freedom, but it's unclear why some feel that religious freedom should be intrinsic to Canadian foreign policy, while others are not only cautious about its definition, but actively oppose its incorporation into the human rights agenda. Both approaches seem to agree that the religious and the secular have independent

⁴⁴ See Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Philpott addresses how theological revolution, in the form of the Reformation, was essential to revolutions in secular ideas like sovereignty.

meaning, and that the two should be ideally separate. Here is the agreement on meaning intrinsic to the modern social imaginary. But this is where the agreement ends.

Laïcité argues that the religious is not rational, and so its claims cannot be adjudicated in the public realm. It is therefore often a destabilizing social element, causing violent confrontation on irreconcilable first principles, unless it can be sequestered to the private realm of individual preference. Any eruption of the religious into the secular public is therefore cause for concern because a rational public square cannot survive the imposition of metaphysical totality. When God speaks, the response cannot be conversation, but simply obedience.⁴⁵

Judeo-Christian secularism likewise agrees that religion should be disestablished from within the public realm, and that religious arguments should not be permitted in the public square. But it disagrees that religion is a necessarily dangerous or unstable social element. Judeo-Christian secularism argues just the reverse: that disestablishment and public pluralism emerged from *within* the Judeo-Christian imagination, and so this tradition in particular sustains the virtues and reasons for a respect for pluralism in the first place. To critics of God's voice overriding politics, Judeo-Christian secularists point out that many modern concepts of human rights, limited government, the dignity of human persons, and so forth are inheritances of, if not Judeo-Christian scriptures, at least the tradition of reflection upon those religious texts. The social forms of the modern social imaginary, in other words, are made possible because of the Judeo-Christian tradition, not despite it. Religion so defined is still distinct from the secular, as a parent is from a child, but such secularism fosters great public respect for religious tradition and inheritance. That respect may, at times, border on a privilege for the Judeo-Christian tradition, which is often where, as in the case of the Office of Religious Freedom, these two rival versions of the religious and the secular collide.

Laïcité understands there to be no productive political relationship with the religious, which is a social evil at worst, a private tolerance at best. For Judeo-Christian secularism, religion is disestablished, but still a public good because the religious is the source of those principles of disestablishment. Of course, Judeo-Christian secularism has two forms, the inclusive and exclusivist kinds. On the one hand, exclusive Judeo-Christian secularism understands only that tradition as being parent to the understandings and forms of the modern social imaginary, and so is suspicious of other religious traditions. On the other hand, inclusive Judeo-Christian

⁴⁵ See for example, Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical reflections on the claim that God speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

secularism acknowledges the Judeo-Christian parentage of those forms, while promoting the possibility that many other religious traditions can and should do the same.

This definition of political theology which appeals to both understandings and practices, of actors both religious and secular, the meanings of the religious and secular, and how these constitute legitimate political authority, is able to disclose not only rival versions of the religious and the secular underlying religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy, but also explain why and to what extent they disagree. Whether resolution can be found in this case is the subject of the final chapter.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter laid out an approach that helps explain the rival versions of the religious and the secular underlying religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy called political theology. This approach addresses what Schmitt, Kubáľková, Toft, Philpott, and Shah call political theology, while also extending their analysis. It asks after not only ideas, but also practices and understandings, not only religious actors, but religious and secular actors as providing oppositional definition to one another, and not only how religious authority relates to political legitimacy, but also how the relationship between the secular and the religious relates to political legitimacy. Political theology in this way discloses the rival versions of the religious and the secular in the debate over the Office of Religious Freedom, and further specifies the rivalry itself. As argued in the last chapter, such specificity tends to be absent in mainstream international theory, derivative as it is of the social forms of the modern social imaginary, and the same assumptions of the secular and the religious that underlie the religious problem with religious freedom.

It should be added that this argument does not relativize or dismiss mainstream international theory. Political theology does not make judgments about the *content* of a social imaginary (for example whether we should think of human persons as disembedded individuals or not), it simply alerts one to often undisclosed arrangements of the secular and the religious. When it comes to religion and religious freedom, mainstream international theory has significant shortcomings, but others may find that those shortcomings are relatively innocuous,

defenders of *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism among them. For those who accept this modern shift of the religious and the secular, this may simply be an exercise in theoretical disclosure of already accepted assumptions. Be that as it may, this exercise discloses that these assumptions exist, that these assumptions have not always been so, and therefore opens the conversation to clarify dissent on both the meanings of the religious and the secular, and – as in the case of *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism – on what kind of interrelationship between the two makes, or doesn't make, for political legitimacy. Political theology makes this conversation possible.

Given this, can *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism be brought to resolution in the Office of Religious Freedom? Resolution is unlikely, but a third option does exist, one which depends on what Taylor calls a radical redefinition of the secular, and which breaks with the binary logic of defining the religious and the secular in oppositional terms. This definition for religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy is the subject of the final chapter, and grounds final, practical advice in the case of the Office of Religious Freedom.

Chapter 6 – Principled Secularism, a new definition for religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy

We think that secularism has to do with the relation of the state and religion; whereas in fact it has to do with the (correct) response of the democratic state to diversity. – Charles Taylor¹

Yes . . . we agree about the rights but on condition that no one asks us why. . . . I am quite certain that my way of justifying belief in the rights of man and the ideal of liberty, equality and fraternity is the only way with a firm foundation in truth. This does not prevent me from being in agreement on these practical convictions with people who are certain that their way of justifying them, entirely different from mine or opposed to mine in its theoretical dynamism, is equally the only way founded upon truth. . . . God forbid that should say it does not matter to know which of the two is right! It matters essentially. The fact remains that, on the practical expression of this charter, they are in agreement and can formulate together common principles of action. – Jacques Maritain²

6.1 Argument and Structure of the Chapter

The argument so far is that part of the explanation for the variation in how Canadian foreign relations understands and applies religious freedom is in its underlying rival versions of the religious and the secular, *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism. Further, that the unique oppositional meaning of the religious and the secular in these two rival versions is itself fundamental to a whole range of practices and understandings of social reality, what Taylor calls the modern social imaginary. Those social forms, the objectified economy, the pre-political public, and an increasingly radical self-government also provide background for mainstream approaches in international theory, a key reason for a new approach, political theology. The definition of political theology advanced, in critical interaction with Carl Schmitt, Vendulka Kubáľková, Monica Toft, Daniel Phipott, and Timothy Shah, is the understandings and practices that political actors have about the meaning of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes legitimate political authority. Political theology therefore clarifies the rivalry between *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian

¹ Charles Taylor, “Why we need a radical redefinition of the secular” in Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan Vanantwerpen (eds.), *The Power of Religious in the Public Sphere* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2011), 36.

² Jacques Maritain (Ed.), *Human Rights: Comments and Interpretations*. A symposium edited by UNESCO (NY: Columbia University Press, 1949), 9-17.

secularism, but also holds promise for clarifying other rival meanings, grounded in other social imaginaries.

This chapter argues for a new definition of religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy, principled secularism. It does this, first, by connecting the study of political theology and what it suggests to a critical perspective on *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism. Political theology is especially concerned with the way political legitimacy is shaped by defining the religious and the secular, a shaping that in both *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism is generally undisclosed and normalized. It is as though one were to read Jacques Maritain's famous reaction to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, that we all agree on these rights provided nobody asks us why, as an invitation to foreclose further debate on the *reasons* for those rights, where he meant the very opposite. Political theology, in fact, demands reasons for where and why the boundaries between the religious and the secular are drawn, and how that shapes politics, rights, and freedoms. Political theology is, in the words of Heinrich Meier, "the counter concept of secularization,"³ or at least the counter concept of the religious and the secular as defined in the modern social imaginary. This is similar to what Daniel Philpott describes in *Just and Unjust Peace*, where he argues for a *rooted reason*, which invites secular and religious actors to present their "full rationales – untruncated, unsantized, unfiltered. Yet it also asks them to enter a dialogue in which they pursue mutual understanding with those different views. Among the fruits of deep dialogue, particularly important is overlapping consensus."⁴ By deliberately disclosing the meanings, relationship, and derivative political legitimacy of the religious and the secular, political theology situates the modern approach as itself a unique political-theological arrangement, one which is, in the oft repeated refrain of Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, both political and theological. Principled secularism, then, must be the practical, political outworking of this political-theological approach.

Second, the definition of principled secularism itself is advanced. It is predicated on what Taylor calls a radical redefinition of the secular, not as the inverse of the religious, as in *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, but as the (proper) response of the state to diversity.

Principled secularism is based on Canadian values, equality of respect and freedom of conscience, and two operative modes that make the realization of those principles

³ As quoted in Nicolas Guilhot, "American Katechon: When Political Theology Became International Relations Theory" in *Constellations* (Vol. 17, No 2, 2010), 233-234.

⁴ Daniel Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace: An Ethic of Political Reconciliation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 116.

possible: the separation of church and state and the neutrality of the state toward religions.⁵ It is principled because it deliberately discloses the values and principles that constitute secularity, Canadian ones in this case, which can be reasonably enough advanced by the Canadian state in foreign policy. It is secular because although it has definite content, principled secularism is agnostic as to the means by which actors arrive at them. It encourages actors to use the range of rationale, religious, secular, and otherwise, to find and justify an overlapping consensus called principled secularism. The Canadian case has the privilege of using secular or consensus values that already exist in its political culture, though the interpretation of these, and their relative priority, is of course up for constant contestation. But the secular in this approach no longer serves as the oppositional twin of the religious, and so also regimes that count as secular are no longer those that simply repress the religious in public life, but ones that actively promote specific public goods, regardless of the rationale for arriving at them. This definition of religious freedom actively invites deliberative religion, however it may be defined, into the public square. It encourages its public, institutional, and practical input in the political process. It makes religious actors and institutions more than second-class citizens in a secular society, bringing them, together with utilitarians, Kantians, libertarians, and more, into the same public.

Thirdly, of course, principled secularism is not an ultimately open, pluralist approach to religious freedom. The common secular principles of Canadian foreign policy have real limits. In adjudicating those limits, what is important is that the state not privilege one kind of reasoning above another, or for the state to clumsily return to the work of defining the religious, but to adjudicate and advance claims on the basis of the principles themselves, and the traditions of Canadian law and culture that inform them. Canadian foreign policy should provide a maximum freedom to foreign political actors defining the religious, rather than exporting and enforcing Canada's own, often internally rival, definitions of the religious. The tensions that manifest between individuals, communities, and the principles of the state should therefore be adjudicated no differently for the secular than for the religious. The state should defend the conscience of its citizens regardless of what logic those citizens bring to those positions, except insofar as those positions violate these principles. This is a process that Taylor calls reasonable accommodation. Nevertheless, several key limits of differentiated

⁵ Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2011), 20.

pluralism do emerge in the Canadian case, and are discussed in turn: the constitutive values of liberal democracy, and history and tradition, which impose practical limits to pluralism.

Finally, this approach is applied to the Canadian Office of Religious Freedom, arguing that such an Office should be a foremost priority in an international landscape defined by the global resurgence of religion, and furthermore that the Office itself should refrain, as much as possible, from backfilling the content of the meaning of the religious, or its relationship to the secular, as in its own dominant models of *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism. *Laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism exported abroad, defensible as they may be in the Canadian domestic context, will likely find themselves absent both the assumptions of secularity and the religious that give them meaning, and the social forms that sustain them. Instead, it should be, as Paul Marshall, Thomas Farr, and others have suggested, that in foreign societies, it is especially religious actors that are important and necessary allies for the eventual political protection of freedoms of conscience and equality of regard. The Office of Religious Freedom should therefore promote principled secularism, which defends the values of equality of respect, freedom of conscience, the separation of church and state, and the neutrality of the state toward religions, while refraining from disqualifying religious rationale or argument in public. This argument also answers some of the concerns expressed in the Canadian debate that religious freedom is being advanced as a “higher priority right” than human rights, since it centres religious freedom in an agenda of principled secularism, which advances rights like freedom of speech, conscience, equality of regard, and so forth as essentially coterminous with it. A religious freedom agenda is essentially a human rights agenda, with a priority on engaging religious actors and religious rationale in sustaining a political consensus. It is uniquely important for that reason, but it is also not an isolated agenda.

The Office should therefore promote secular Canadian values, while soliciting as many rationales as possible within these contexts for why such a consensus is believed. Importantly, contrary to *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, the question of *why* should and must be facilitated *before* and alongside an overlapping consensus. This points to four practical pieces of advice: 1) the limits of a secular state in monopolizing the logic for its own legitimacy; 2) the high priority of freedom itself, especially religious freedom, for actors of all rationale to be free to articulate their own deep reasons for supporting, or dissenting from, that consensus; 3) the rejection of *laïcité* and exclusive Judeo-Christian secularism in foreign policy, as self-defeating and exclusionary; 4) the strong opposition to blasphemy and

apostasy laws, and the high priority of the protection of minority dissenters in majority religious cultures, for example reformers in Pakistan, like Shahbaz Bhatti.

Table 1.4: Studying Rival Versions of Religious Freedom using Political Theology: Laïcité, Judeo-Christian Secularism, and Principled Secularism

	Political Theology: the understandings and practices that political actors have about the meaning of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes legitimate political authority			
Rival Versions of Religious Freedom	Understanding and practice of the religious	Understanding and practice of the secular	Relationship between religious and secular	What constitutes legitimate political authority?
Laïcité	Transcendent, but privatized and individualized concept of religion	Neutral, rational, public, in principle its logic and social forms are accessible to all people	Antagonistic, the secular must be safeguarded from the religious to preserve the political	Only secular politics are legitimate, limited democratic progress can be made in religious states, reproducing religion-free politics produces better changes of a rational peace
Judeo-Christian Secularism	Transcendent, but privatized and individualized concept of religion	Neutral, rational, public, in principle its logic and social forms are accessible to all people	Mutually constitutive, while the two are separate, the secular owes its origins to JC tradition. Exclusivist claims only Judeo-Christian can produce secularity. Inclusivist that in Canada, so far, it has been Judeo-Christian tradition, but other traditions may also be able.	Limited democratic progress can be made apart from Judeo-Christian values at the basis of a political culture; best chance at peace is to replicate those values in a polity (whether via JC or others)
Principled Secularism	Defaults to indigenous actors, boundaries, limits, and meanings of religion are variable	Principled and explicit, in Canada equality of regard, freedom of conscience; separation of church and state and neutrality of the state toward religion	Religious, like other kinds of reasoning, should be part of the rationale by which political actors come to agree on principled secularism (overlapping consensus). The state does not monopolize the logic by which actors arrive at consensus.	Legitimate political authority is constituted by secular principles that emerge in overlapping consensus from political actors, not by the rationale by which actors arrive at them

6.2 Getting from political theology to principled secularism

Political theology is especially concerned with the way that political legitimacy is shaped by defining the religious and the secular. It has been argued to this point that such a picture is often undisclosed and normalized by laïcité and Judeo-Christian secularism. This section lays out political theology's implicit criticism of laïcité and Judeo-Christian secularism, and offers

a preference for principled secularism as an approach to religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy.

Although using a different definition of both political theology and secularization, Heinrich Meier gets the basics right when he says that “political theology . . . is the counter-concept of secularization.”⁶ To do political theology is to implicitly suggest that there are, or at one time were, multiple meanings of the religious and the secular that deserve explanation, and whose relationship and meaning shape political legitimacy. Political theology makes secularity as the normalized, inverse of the religious at least contestable, and at most it discloses it as its own unique (modern) political-theological arrangement.

Political theology essentially denies that by expunging the religious from the secular public, such a public can be practically neutral and rational. In fact, if the arguments of those like Carl Schmitt are to be believed, sometimes when the line between the secular and the religious shifts, previously religious ideas are installed as secular. Taylor names some of these understandings and practices as the marks of the modern social imaginary. To even, therefore, speak of political theology is to abandon certain transhistorical definitions of the secular and the religious as untenable.

Recall that of *laïcité*, Elizabeth Shakman Hurd writes that it,

marks out the domain of the secular and associates that domain with public authority, common sense, rational argument, justice, tolerance, and public interest. It reserves the religious as that which it is not, and associates it with a personal God and beliefs about God . . . not the opposite of theological discourse. It enacts particular kind of theological discourse in its own right.⁷

Political theology discloses the contestability of this demarcation of the secular as common, rational, just, tolerant. It can do this precisely because this kind of secularity is, as Hurd argues, a kind of theological discourse in its own right. Of *laïcité*, she writes, it “constructs and delimits the temporal domain in a particular fashion. This is a political move. It is also a theological one.”⁸ Religious freedom defined by this meaning of the secular is something like private conscience, or preference. It is a choice, a tolerance, among other existential options, but it has no public role, no rational adjudication, no political application. The boundaries

⁶ As quoted in Nicolas Guilhot, “American Katechon: When Political Theology Became International Relations Theory” in *Constellations* (Vol. 17, No 2, 2010), 233-234.

⁷ Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*, 35.

⁸ Hurd, 35.

between the religious and the secular are fixed between the private and the public, beyond scrutiny, intrinsic to the free practice of democracy.

As Taylor has shown in *A Secular Age*, the implications of *laïcité* are more than simply institutional or political, but quite fundamental. It changes the way human beings are understood, what knowledge counts as valid and public, and what realities and histories are politically legitimate. And it does most of this with the installation of background assumptions that are only rarely, if ever, disclosed in the public domain, or are simply thought of as common sense.

In some ways, Judeo-Christian secularism is less problematic than *laïcité*, precisely because it names and owns the political and theological choices that animate its definition of the religious and the secular. Unlike *laïcité*, Judeo-Christian secularism makes no secret of and no claim to ultimately neutrality. The primary disagreement between *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism is, after all, on political legitimacy. Judeo-Christian secularists imagine one particular tradition, the Judeo-Christian one, as the generator and incubator of the social and political virtues that make political secularism and religious freedom possible; *laïcité* certainly does not. Despite this, Judeo-Christian secularists do not often claim special political privilege for those religions themselves. Like *laïcité*, it still believes in the oppositional definition of the religious. So, under the Judeo-Christian perspective, all religions should be treated fairly and equally by the state, but the Judeo-Christian tradition is somewhat more equal than the others, because its theology is what makes modern secularity possible. The Judeo-Christian religion functions in similar ways to what Janet Epp Buckingham described as the original French and English compact of Canada. These remain the official languages of Canada, although others are welcome to come and practice their own languages, provided the understanding that the tradition of the land and the formal services of the state are predicated on French and English. In some areas, as in Taylor's native province of Quebec, the political imposition of language – and indeed of secularism – is somewhat more pronounced.⁹ But despite Judeo-Christian secularism's more forthcoming disclosure for political theology, two serious issues invalidate this as a definition for religious freedom going forward.

⁹ See especially Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2011), Chapter 6: "Liberal-Pluralist Secularism: The Case of Quebec", 53-61.

First, by being deliberately predicated on the overlap of two specific religious traditions, Judeo-Christian secularism runs the risk, and often afool, of the basic test of state neutrality and public pluralism. This is the complaint studied at length earlier, by secular pundits like Doug Saunders and Arvind Sharma. Even Elizabeth Shakman Hurd issued a caution, that the prevailing culture of Judeo-Christian secularism in Canada (as she saw it) ran the risk of repeating what, in her mind, was the hegemonic definition and practice of religious freedom in the United States of America. Religious freedom may, as Arvind Sharma said, mean very different things for different religious traditions, which even take the meanings of the religious and the secular themselves to be in dispute.

Ultimate inclusivity is not necessarily a demand of political theology, of course. Political theology looks for the forthright declaration of the meanings and relationship between the secular and the religious. Judeo-Christian secularism seems to pass this test, on the one hand, because it alerts actors to the very deliberate relationship between the Judeo-Christian tradition and the democratic secularism it makes possible. The two are distinct, but one produces the other, and this is the key public value of that religious tradition. One may disagree quite strongly with this argument, as Saunders and Sharma do, but the privilege of disagreement is granted in part because disclosure has been made.

It is, however, very important to show that Judeo-Christian secularism leaves undisclosed the prior essential component of political theology: the definition of the religious and the secular itself. Both Judeo-Christian secularism and *laïcité* share the assumption that the religious and the secular are, in fact, oppositional, and takes as relatively unproblematic the shift in those boundaries intrinsic to the modern social imaginary. Judeo-Christian secularism has more enthusiasm for the *role* of the religious in creating and sustaining a secular public square, but it assumes the naturalized separation of these two. The secular may owe a debt to the Judeo-Christian tradition, but it is still that which is the inverse of the religious, that which can be appealed to apart from any specific political-theological tradition. The Judeo-Christian logic runs that one need not be Judeo-Christian to enjoy Judeo-Christian secularism precisely because it has moved beyond its religious roots, and now functions at the level of a neutral, public space. But Judeo-Christian secularism is also left with the unenviable task of defining something called religion, which is distinct from something called the secular, and dividing the two in public, in a surprisingly similar fashion to *laïcité*. This transforms not only politics, but also religion, marking which sorts of beliefs are religious and which ones are secular.

It should be added that exclusivist Judeo-Christian secularism is incompatible with principled secularism, in a way in which inclusivist Judeo-Christian secularism is not necessarily so. It is, for example, problematic to argue that secularity only emerges from the Judeo-Christian tradition, and so monopolize the rationale by which secularity can be arrived at, in a way in which it is not so problematic to argue that democratic secularism has been partly derivative of the Judeo-Christian tradition in Canada. In fact, in so far as advocates of Judeo-Christian secularism in Canada, like Fr. Raymond de Souza, have often and publicly suggested other traditions, including non-religious ones, can and do form part of the underlying rationale for Canadian values, inclusive Judeo-Christian secularism may well be subsidiary, and compatible approach with principled secularism.

Political theology is especially important because it offers this more complete picture of political legitimacy, in both the case of *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism. The uncommon effort to do this, however, is a testament in part to the enduring power of these rival versions in Canada. In the case of *laïcité*, there is the issue that its account is presented as rational, historical, neutral progress. This presentation is directly opposed to the point of political theology, whose principle task is disclosing the religious and the secular and its relationship, precisely because alternative arrangements and meanings are available. In Elizabeth Shakman Hurd's language, political theology names the undisclosed political, and the theological, moves are made. It clarifies political and theological choices that have simply been accepted as a neutral inheritance.

Political theology is also directly contrary to liberal theorists, including Quentin Skinner, who write that "too much talk of ontology is bad for a pluralistic society."¹⁰ It is, in fact, too little talk of ontology, too little description of the nature of reality, of the political, the secular and the religious, which can yield a hegemonic political logic. Jacques Maritain said that "we all agree on these rights provided nobody asks us why," but it is forgotten that he quickly added, "God forbid that should say it does not matter to know which of [us] is right!"¹¹ Maritain's injunction was not an encouragement to ignore foundational claims on rights, but rather in the process of deliberately engaging those foundational claims, to find points of practical consensus, despite disagreements on the rationale by which this consensus is arrived at. A consensus can never be found or enriched in the absence of such deliberative contestation.

¹⁰ As quoted in Stephen K. White, *Sustaining Affirmation*, 43. Skinner also warns that Taylor has placed himself on a slippery, theistic-Hegelian slope, at the end of which lies intolerance and coercion. I do not share Skinner's concerns, for reasons that should be made clear by this chapter.

¹¹ Maritain, 9-17.

Daniel Philpott makes a parallel argument in his 2012 book *Just and Unjust Peace*, in which he looks at the often important role that religious traditions and actors play in reconciliation, and especially in places with weak, or failed, states. He argues that religious arguments should be considered as part of this process of finding an overlapping (secular) consensus. He says, “There is nothing inherent in religious rationales that prevents them from being the subject of meaningful and constructive conversations about fundamental matters of justice. Leaders from diverse religious or secular perspectives can seek to find an overlapping consensus on truth commissions, trials, and reparations, just as they might seek to find common ground on global warming, reducing their country’s debt, or protecting the rights of women.”¹² His book is largely devoted to presenting evidence in countries after large-scale injustice of just this kind of consensus on commissions, trials, and reparations. In advancing these views, Philpott argues that it may be useful to express, as much as possible, arguments in secular language, but this is not the same as accepting secular rationale. “Secular language,” he says, “is not the same as secular philosophy or ideology. It is rather mode of expression – and not necessarily inimical to religion.”¹³ That is, important political claims can be advanced using secular language, that nonetheless are compatible with, and derivative of, theological rationale. Religious proponents need not be asked to accept the justifications of secular philosophy that are not their own.¹⁴ He calls this kind of dialogue rooted reason, which is “not best described as translation, which implies a process of beginning with a set of ideas from one tradition and aiming to re-express them in another. Describing rooted reason better is mutual resonance, involving a reciprocal back-and-forth process of comparison and efforts at mutual understanding, something more like a five-way intersection than a one-way street.”¹⁵

Philpott’s mutual resonance gets closer to what is described as principled secularism, while at the same time situating the other rival approaches, *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, as monopolistic on the rationale by which such a resonance could be achieved. Though distinct, and often at odds with each other, *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism are both models of secularism which presume the logic of the religious as the inverse of the secular, and of the two as practically and conceptually distinguishable in specific ways for public and private

¹² Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace*, 112.

¹³ Philpott, 113.

¹⁴ Philpott, 115.

¹⁵ Philpott, 21.

practice. They assume this modern shift, and the constellation of political power – public and private, and religious and secular – that ensues.

The political theological preference for principled secularism should therefore start to become clearer. Not only does principled secularism deliberately disestablish monopolistic political rationale, it also disestablishes what Taylor calls, citing Rousseau, a “civil religion.”¹⁶ It restores the dignity of rationale of all kinds, including the religious, as genuine participants, not second class citizens, in the overlapping work of secularism.

6.3 Defining Principled Secularism

A defining feature of principled secularism is that religion’s place in the public sphere should not be treated as a “special case,” though for a range of historical reasons it has come to be seen this way.¹⁷ There is no reason, argues Taylor, for the state to single out religion as against nonreligious viewpoints.¹⁸ So in contrast to understandings of secularism that fixate on the religious as the central problem, Taylor instead offers an understanding of secularism predicated on balancing or adjudicating the claims of different goods that democratic societies take to be fundamental. **Principled secularism is the advancement of fundamental consensus principles, without monopolizing the public logic, religious or otherwise, by which actors articulate their support for those principles.** This is like what Philpott calls an exercise in rooted reason, not the injunction of political actors to translate their convictions into a supposedly neutral public philosophy, but the finding of mutual resonance, of overlap in a pluralist dialogue. Principled secularism defaults to actors on the religious, whose meanings may be variable, while at the same time deliberately enlisting both religious and secular rationale in the project of sustaining strong reasons for these overlapping principles. As an approach to religious freedom, principled secularism is therefore part of a broader human rights agenda, sustaining that religious, as well as secular, actors must be engaged in the process of mutual resonance, which suggests not only a variety of protections but also some concrete values.

¹⁶ Maclure and Taylor, xx.

¹⁷ Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan Vanantwerpen (eds.), *The Power of Religious in the Public Sphere* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2011), 6.

¹⁸ Ibid.

For Canadian foreign policy, **the goods of religious freedom, as defined by principled secularism, rest on two major principles: equality of respect and freedom of conscience; and two operative modes that make the realization of those principles possible: the separation of church and state and the neutrality of the state toward religions.**¹⁹ This changes the way the label “secularist” is conceived when applied to political communities. Secularist states are not primarily “bulwarks against religion” but those that “respond in principled fashion to the irreversible and ever growing internal diversity of modern societies.”²⁰

What exactly is the relationship between these major principles and operative modes? It is important to distinguish principles from operative modes because the principles themselves are moral aims, while the operative modes are not. This is key because the operative modes are institutional arrangements that are designed to safeguard the moral aims, and are often interpreted in different ways. Appeals to operative modes can, at times, be conflated with the moral aims themselves, producing a backward logic that can obscure the moral intent of principled secularism. For example, the separation of church and state is an indispensable institutional arrangement that protects equality of respect and freedom of conscience by proclaiming state neutrality in the case of core convictions and practices. But when this separation is interpreted to mean the erasure of the religious from the public sphere, as in the case of *laïcité*, equality of respect and freedom of conscience can be compromised in the interest of an absolutized operative mode. The *ends* of equality and conscience can be subjected to the *means* of separation of church and state. This is clearly not the intent. Freedom of religion cannot mean freedom *from* religion, any more than the freedom to accept or reject Marxism cannot mean the freedom from Marxist arguments and practices.

The institutional principles of separation of church and state and the neutrality of the state are therefore derived from the principles of equal respect and freedom of conscience. The interpretation of the former may never be used to compromise the latter. The former also has a rather wide and varied application, which can be seen by various religious freedom controversies that have arisen in the West. Take, for example, the Muslim headscarf controversy.²¹ Reasonable debate over a Muslim teacher wearing a headscarf in class may oscillate between the view that overt religious practice compromises the neutrality of the

¹⁹ Maclure and Taylor, 20.

²⁰ Mendieta and Vanantwerpen, 7.

²¹ For a recent survey of this controversy see Hilal Elver, *The Headscarf Controversy: Secularism and Freedom of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

public school system, and the view that preventing the teacher from practicing their religion is an infringement of religious freedom. Quebec has resolved this question differently than other Canadian provinces, as have the states of Germany and England, showing that difficult questions can be resolved in different ways.²²

By connecting the definition of religious freedom to both moral principles and institutional arrangements, the political theological argument for both understandings *and* practices is also implicitly answered. Religious freedom is not only about an equality of respect and freedom of conscience, as though it should be approached in a merely individual way, it is also about the institutions that make public, religious practices and manifestations protected and possible. By explicitly saying that the state should not monopolize the rationale by which its members come to a secular consensus (that we are bound, indeed required in the name of pluralism to disagree on *why* we hold these principles to be imperative), the public manifestation and articulation of rival rationale, including the religious, is encouraged. As already argued, this is not only important because the religious has institutional and practical manifestation beyond the individual and private, but also because the only way to ensure a consensus, what Philpott calls an evolving mutual resonance, is to have the kind of debate that Maritain references in the U.N. Declaration. It is important to remember that he is famous for saying we all agree on these rights provided nobody asks us why, not we all agree on these rights, though none of us are sure why.

The complaint could, at this point, justifiably be made that by privileging certain kinds of institutional arrangements, the separation of church and state, an implicit definition of the religious has in fact been offered. Could it not be said that by disallowing the establishment of religion, an intolerable restriction has been placed on the meaning of the religious, in for example theocratic societies where this may not be accepted? Pluralism is a restriction. But it is not only religious logic that cannot be allowed to monopolize the state's rationale for its secular, overlapping consensus, but logic of any kind. Under this argument it is both the Islamic Republic (for example, Afghanistan) as with a Secular Republic (for example, France), that by monopolizing the logic by which its citizens may support its principles, states run the risk of violating religious freedom. It does, of course, merit immediately clarifying that the violation of that public logic in countries like Afghanistan can be met with charges of

²² For a broader discussion of this in the Quebec case, see Maclure and Taylor, 24.

treason, whereas the violation of that logic in countries like France is met with more subtle disciplines.

Such a characterization of religious freedom is obviously still dependent on political adjudication, where principles of secularism may occasionally conflict with one another. But the point of this definition of religious freedom as principled secularism is not to provide the technical specifications by which disagreements over religious freedom can be systematically resolved. Rather it is to disclose the political (and theological) choices that are made in definitions of religious freedom and the order of priority between principles and institutional arrangements. It is also to characterize political systems on the basis of these principles, rather than on the presence or influence of the religious, however defined, in these systems. Religious freedom therefore protects both the individual person – their equality and freedom of conscience (their understandings) – but also the institutional arrangements that protect the practices that carry and make the meanings of those understandings possible.

6.4 The limits of pluralism in principled secularism

Pluralism has become one of the central concerns of political philosophy, often because it both lies at the heart of the most pressing disagreements, and itself structures how those disagreements should be handled, in societies. What John Rawls himself called “the fact of reasonable pluralism” was a tacit recognition that there are limits to rationality, limits to the ability of reasoned, propositional argument to access and decide on the questions of ultimate meaning and the nature of human development and progress.

The dominant strategy for managing this fundamental pluralism has been to conceptualize the answers to these questions as spiritual or religious, and so to privatize them, leaving to public debate those matters which can be reasonably adjudicated. This is the strategy of both *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism. The strategy of principled secularism is, in fact, to call for more, not less, public articulation of the deep reasons for a secular consensus, both as the condition for that consensus, and as the principle means by which pluralism is continually refreshed. Yet the state can hardly be indifferent to certain core principles intrinsic to the equality of persons and the freedom of conscience: human dignity, basic human rights, and so forth. This is the first major limit on pluralism in principled secularism, the *constitutive*

values of political systems, the content of that the consensus. In Canada, these constitutive values are liberal and democratic; Taylor says, “They provide these systems with their foundations and aims.”²³

These values are not neutral. However, these values can certainly be argued by Canadians to be legitimate because they essentially enable modern pluralism, providing citizens with fundamentally different rationale for the secular to live together in peace. Taylor writes,

They [these values] allow individuals to be sovereign in their choices of conscience and to define their own life plan while respecting others’ right to do the same. That is why people with very diverse religious, metaphysical, and secular convictions can share and affirm these constructive values. They often arrive at them by very different paths, but they come together to defend them. The presence of what Rawls calls an “overlapping consensus about the basic public values is the condition for the existence of pluralist societies. . . .

All of them agree on the principle, even though they cannot reach an agreement about the reasons to warrant it. The challenge of contemporary societies is to ensure that everyone comes to see the basic principles of political association as legitimate, based on his or her own perspective.²⁴

The implication is that the state be neutral not only toward the religious but also to different conceptions that may stand as secular equivalents of religions. Writes Taylor, “The state can be neither Christian nor Muslim nor Jewish, but, by the same token, it should also be neither Marxist, nor Kantian, nor utilitarian.”²⁵ Indeed, a political system that replaces the religious with a comprehensive secular philosophy as its foundation makes religious members into second-class citizens, since these citizens cannot embrace the reasons that are officially recognized philosophy.²⁶ In such an instance, the political system may end up simply *replacing* established religion, including the core beliefs that define them. Taylor recalls the experience of secularism versus Catholicism in France, or versus Islam in Turkey, both instances *laïcité* emerging as a reaction against a formerly strong civil religious background. In these contexts, secularism in its most radical form appealed to an independent morality founded on supposedly neutral reason and on specific configurations of human nature. Taylor says, “That type of political system replaces established religion with secular moral

²³ Maclure and Taylor, 11.

²⁴ Maclure and Taylor, 11-12.

²⁵ Charles Taylor, “Why we need a radical redefinition of the secular,” 50.

²⁶ Maclure and Taylor, 13.

philosophy.”²⁷ This, he says, is what Jean-Jacques Rousseau had in mind in his expression of moral and political philosophy as “civil religion.”

So a political community will be qualified not on the secular equivalent of religious doctrine but, rather, on a “range of values and principles that can be the object of an overlapping consensus.”²⁸ By relying on common public values, the moral equality of all citizens is ensured and, at least potentially, all citizens may embrace the state’s own broad orientations from within the basis of their own conceptions of the good.

This is a kind of cosmopolitanism but it is not ultimately inclusive. As suggested above, the state’s neutrality is not complete because certain basic values are constitutive of liberal, democracies. These values have their own histories, their own cosmic and sacred dimensions, many of which can be found in the repertory of the modern social imaginary. Taylor writes, “In its neutrality toward citizens’ systems of beliefs and values, the state *defends* their equality and their freedom to pursue their own aims. The state thus takes the side of equality and autonomy, allowing citizens to choose their life plan and mode of life. As a result, believers and atheists alike can live in accordance with their convictions, but they cannot impose their conceptions of the world on others.”²⁹

But this leads to two complaints: First, doesn’t this repeat many of the assumptions latent in the modern social imaginary, especially the pre-political public and self-government? And, the reverse complaint, doesn’t defaulting on a thicker civil rationale for supporting these principles make for a riskier politics, a thin consensus that exacerbates rather than mitigates the modern malaise of fragmentation?

In the first place, it is true that principled secularism is derivative of some of the social forms of the modern social imaginary, though not its prior demarcations of the religious and the secular. This is defensible in part because principled secularism deliberately discloses those assumptions, and its process and ends may, indeed will, look different if followed in other social imaginaries. Therefore, it is also defensible because what is being advanced is a definition of religious freedom for Canadian foreign policy. It stands to reason that modern democratic states like Canada would advance a definition of religious freedom that parallels

²⁷ Ibid, 14.

²⁸ Ibid, 15.

²⁹ Ibid, 17.

its own modern, democratic aims and values. It would be strange to imagine it doing otherwise.

Liberal democracy's constitutive values are therefore neither neutral nor ultimately rationally defensible, but by stating them as principles they are at least disclosed. It may be the case that one or another religious tradition has a more developed political-theological tradition which articulates the roots of these principles from within their conceptions of the good life, which is certainly what Judeo-Christian secularists would argue. But it is not invalid, it is in fact quite important to Canadian foreign policy, that varying religious traditions, as we have come to know them, work internally to develop a political-theological hermeneutic which connects the constitutive values of liberal democracy to their own conceptions of the good life.

To the second complaint, that of a thin consensus, absent public rationale for its deeper meanings being unable to sustain political legitimacy, there is a parallel to *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism. Both *laïcité* and exclusivist Judeo-Christian secularism monopolize the rationale which actors bring to politics. The break from civil religious unanimity animating national unity is therefore neither easy nor obvious. Taylor writes, "The model that bases the unity of the political community on the adherence of citizens to common political principles, despite their differences about the underlying reasons for them, is radically different."³⁰ Not only does unity not lie in this thicker unanimity of meanings, but efforts to establish, or reestablish, such uniformity are dangerous to principled secularism. The nostalgia with which certain conservative factions in Europe, America, and to a more limited extent parts of Canada, invoke a return to a founding moral or civil religious unity as the prerequisite to national unity is only one example. "The premise that national unity required unanimity regarding collective aims," says Taylor, "has continued to exert a certain hold on people's minds."³¹

More than a few political theologians themselves have lodged their displeasure with this sentiment. Oliver O'Donovan, for example, is especially cynical that individuals and civil society can be counted on to spontaneously generate sympathy for secularism's principles of equality and conscience. O'Donovan disagrees,

that justice must include confessional silence, even in the face of error. Which means that justice can be practiced in community only when shorn of its fundamental reasons – reminiscent of Jacques Maritain and those "private" reasons for teaching the

³⁰ Ibid, 17-18.

³¹ Ibid, 18.

democratic charter! The core of my anti-pluralism is the conviction that justice itself cannot survive such a scalping. Impartiality is not the essence of justice. Justice is a train of corrective reasoning about all the goods of human existence, from God to land allotments, and it can be nothing else. Cut it loose from such reasoning, and you have only an abstract formalism, a house swept and garnished waiting for seven worse devils.³²

O'Donovan's assessment of principled secularism would undoubtedly be that the thin moral sentiments that it safeguards are too stripped of rationale for citizens or communities to actually embrace them. Principled secularism leaves as an open question, after all, *how* it is that people come to encompass secularism's principles as part of or an extension of their core beliefs. It is a gamble, and maybe a dangerous one in O'Donovan's judgment. Politics for O'Donovan must be unidirectional to enjoy not only stability but also a proper account for human flourishing. It is no surprise to see O'Donovan describing the writing of his book, *The Desire of the Nations*, in the preface to the paperback edition in this way: "I set out to discover the kingship of Christ, and ended up, as I am told, with a defence of Christendom."³³

What to make of O'Donovan's complaint, then, except to say that secularism is predicated on a different hierarchy of moral principles, the foremost being equality of respect and freedom of conscience? O'Donovan's is one of the better, but not uncommon, complaints that such secularism privileges the wrong values, or orders them incorrectly. Principled secularism presumes, importantly, that individuals and communities are best made sovereign over choices of the good life, over the meanings and boundaries of the religious. Reasonable theorists may disagree on this basis, but the state will continue to defend their rights to do so, while demanding no such anti-pluralism ever be politically established. Herein lies a definite limit to principled secularism in the form of its constitutive values of freedom of conscience and equality of regard, while at the same time explicitly defaulting on the rationale by which to support these values.

A second, important limit on pluralism in principled secularism is heritage, and especially religious heritage. Does principled secularism, for example, require the sacrifice of a society's religious heritage? Certain religious symbols persist in public places, symbols that seem exclusivist while at the same time representing a legitimate link to a political culture's

³² Oliver O'Donovan, "Response to Jonathan Chaplin" in Craig Bartholomew, Jonathan Chaplin, Robert Song, and Al Wolters (Eds), *A Royal Priesthood? The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan*. Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, V. 3. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 313.

³³ Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the roots of political theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ix.

past. The cross on Mount Royal in Montreal, for instance, does not necessarily make Montreal a Catholic city, nor does it compel non-Catholics to act against their conscience. It represents a time in Quebec's history, a symbolic reminder of those who came before, not a public identification with one or another religious tradition. This symbolic history can be more complicated, of course, when it is not a cross on a hill, but a crucifix in a legislature, as with that installed by Maurice Duplessis in Quebec in 1936.

There will nonetheless still be cases where the state will not demonstrate perfect neutrality. A notable example is the common calendar allowing citizens and institutions to coordinate and plan. Almost all widely used calendars have a religious origin. This explains why in many provinces businesses were closed on Sundays, and why most of the legal holidays in Canada coincide with Christian religious celebrations. It is hardly possible to create a purged calendar, even if it is possible to undo the old Lord's Day Act which specifically prohibits businesses from being open on Sundays. Businesses are closed on Christmas and Easter, but not on Jewish or Muslim holidays, or for the Chinese New Year's. This may not be illegitimate. Taylor argues, "The norms of a society are not determined solely as a function of abstract principles of justice: they are also determined by context (demography, history, and so on)."³⁴ It is hardly possible to have fifty legal holidays in a calendar. Yet even though the norms themselves may be legitimate for these reasons, they also favour the majority, and so there may be moments where reasonable accommodation should be made to ensure equity.

So a principled secularist approach to religious freedom requires a radical redefinition of the secular, one that allows maximum sovereignty for persons and their communities to determine the meanings of the religious. But neither is it an unlimited subjectivism, which offers no moral orientation to the state. In fact, principled secularism is limited in several important ways, including the constitutive values of Canadian democracy, and the practical realities of heritage and tradition.

6.5 Principled Secularism and the Canadian Office of Religious Freedom

³⁴ Maclure and Taylor, 68.

The practical approach of principled secularism to religious freedom answers a number of concerns of both *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, although it is not ultimately compatible with either. It answers concerns over the establishment of the religious, or establishment of any kind of monopolistic public rationale. It answers concerns about the powers of the state in repressing, or repressively confining, the religious. It defines an approach to religious freedom that, in short, admits to the essentially contested nature of the religious, its shifts that take place not only in western but especially in foreign societies, about what does and does not qualify as a religious or secular argument. It also partly answers the concerns of Elizabeth Shakman Hurd's co-editor on the Immanent Frame, Winifred F. Sullivan, when he says that:

The right kind of religion, the approved religion, is always that which is protected, while the wrong kind, whether popular or unpopular, is always restricted or even prohibited.³⁵

There is no right or wrong kind of rationale in principled secularism, but to Sullivan's point, it is true that both religious and secular rationale can be outside a community's consensus. In Canadian foreign relations, this would be rationale that sustains principles that neither foreground the equality of respect, freedom of conscience, or its operative modes of separation of church and state and the neutrality of the state to religions. Does this repeat Hurd's complaint that an intolerable restriction has been placed on the religious, and that the western settlement of the religious and the secular is again being exported as naturalized, merely under a new approach?

Principled secularism does not necessarily mean this. It depends, for example, how principled secularism is applied in the work of religious freedom. One could apply these principles dogmatically, and pursue a replication of their Canadian forms and rationale in foreign societies. But one could also replicate the *process* of principled secularism in foreign societies, the mutual resonance that might produce principles that are different than those of Canadian values, but nonetheless valid as a consensus in that society. This is a difficult process for Canadians to be disinterested in. Principles other than, for example, equality of regard and freedom of conscience, are not mere preferences for Canadians, they are fundamental to Canadian identity and thereby its foreign relations and advocacy. Canadian

³⁵ Winnifred F. Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 155.

foreign relations should, therefore, not apologize for advocating these values and these operative modes, while at the same time recognizing that principled secularism cannot function apart from an indigenous rationale by which to sustain them. These are powers that are beyond the state, especially foreign states, to paternalistically dictate the rationality by which indigenous political actors come to sustain Canadian principles. The Canadian tradition, for example, has a long history of Judeo-Christian and laicist rationale, and this can clearly not be exported in its political-theological form to societies like Pakistan. This is not only morally questionable, it is practically unworkable.

This underscores **the first practical shift in religious freedom foreign policy, the recognition of limits of state-based foreign relations, and states in general to monopolize the rationale of political legitimacy.** The Office of Religious Freedom has neither the power nor the authority to artificially impose laicist or Judeo-Christian rationale in foreign contexts, and for this reason it is also severely limited in controlling the process and values that emerge from within a foreign context. This does not mean that the Office should not promote the Canadian values and operative modes that define its approach to religious freedom. It should do so, and do so without apology as in the interests of its people, as the best picture of moral and political legitimacy that it knows. But the Office must also recognize that there are serious limits on what religious freedom advocacy can accomplish in the absence of parallel, agreed upon principles. The Office can neither legislate nor shame foreign polities into secular principles for which no, or marginal, indigenous rationale exists.

The death of Shahbaz Bhatti, which underwrote the Office itself, is evidence of this. The limitations of the state of Pakistan are more than theoretical, they are dangerously practical. Weak states and strong religions still make up much of the developing world. Bhatti was an appointed Minister of the government of Pakistan, whose stated priority was to change those laws. The government could not protect its own minister. Indeed, when President Musharraf signalled a change in the blasphemy and apostasy laws, militants warned, “If the government tries to finish it, the government itself will be finished.”³⁶ The sad outcome of state pressure on foreign governments is the adoption of secular language, without the underwriting rationale, making these principles unenforceable, even dangerous for political actors to promote.

³⁶ As quoted in Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, *Silenced*, 100.

An example of this is also in neighbouring Afghanistan, in the conversion and apostasy trial of Abdul Rahman in 2007, a state which despite enshrining religious freedom in its western written constitution, was forced to exile a convert to Christianity for fear of its own citizens. Abdul Wasi, the prosecutor, told the court in Rahman's proceedings, "He is known as a microbe in society, and he should be cut off and removed from the rest of Muslim society and should be killed."³⁷ A prison employee told news reporters, "We will cut him into little pieces. . . . There's no need to see him." Other inmates threatened him, so he had to be transferred to a high security prison.³⁸ In Friday sermons, clerics demanded his execution.³⁹ Under enormous international pressure, the case was dismissed, sparking a 700-strong protest, including clerics, chanting "Death to Christians," "Death to America," and "Abdul Rahman must be executed!"⁴⁰ The lower chamber of Parliament demanded Rahman not be allowed to leave, but when he was released on March 27, he fled to Italy two days later. Repeated calls were made for his extradition to face execution.⁴¹

According to Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, the case of a Shahbaz Bhatti is therefore not isolated. Any state Office, including the Canadian Office of Religious Freedom, must be prepared to advocate strongly for the values and operative modes that inform its principled secularism, while on the other hand recognizing that its powers are severely limited in what can be accomplished apart from widespread indigenous rationales to sustain those same principles. This reflects an emerging body of work on religious freedom advocacy and human rights. Ziya Meral, for example, argues that "religious freedom advocacy is most effective in mobilizing governments, international bodies, and mass media when it appeals to international law rather than theology."⁴² Principled secularism suggests that religious communities are intrinsic to the development of religious freedom, but it also has a much

³⁷ As quoted in Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, *Silenced: How Apostasy & Blasphemy Codes are Choking Freedom Worldwide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 106-107.

³⁸ Barker, "Afghan Man Faces Death for Abandoning Islam," *Chicago Tribune*, March 21 2006. Daniel Cooney, "Afghan Court Drops Christian Convert Case," *AP*, March 26, 2006, <http://proteinwisdom.com/?p=6192>. Accessed February 26, 2013.

³⁹ Abdul Waheed Wafa, "Preachers in Kabul Urge Execution of Covert to Christianity," *New York Times*, March 25, 2006. <http://nytimes.com/2006/03/25/international/asia/25convert.html>. Accessed February 26, 2013. Pamela Constable, "For Afghans, Allies, a Clash of Values," *Washington Post*, March 3 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/22/AR2006032201113.html> . Accessed February 26, 2013.

⁴⁰ As quoted in Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, *Silenced: How Apostasy & Blasphemy Codes are Choking Freedom Worldwide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 107.

⁴¹ "Afghan Clerics Threaten Trouble over Convert," Reuters, April 2, 2006. http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=102x2202973. Accessed February 26, 2013.

⁴² Ziya Meral, "International Religious Freedom Advocacy in the Field" in *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* (Vol. 10, No 3. Fall 2012), 30.

reduced enthusiasm for the ability or moral authority of states themselves to do more than facilitate those communities. States, and Offices of states, cannot do political theology for its citizens. Meral writes,

To use theological and cultural discourse to ask for a blanket condemnation of the treatment of converts from Islam is counterproductive, as Muslims perceive this as an attack on Islam and a patronizing dictation of what Islam should or should not teach. Only Muslims can reform their own religious traditions, and this is outside of the scope of non-Muslim RFA [religious freedom advocacy].⁴³

States, especially foreign states, can at best serve the role as facilitator, as traditions, religious and otherwise, do the work of political theology to sustain rationale for the values and operative modes the Canadian approach to religious freedom finds essential.

Second, this should begin to make clear why **the freedom of religious communities, of all communities whose rationale is essential for the support of a secular consensus, is and should become a high priority for Canadian foreign policy.** There can be no enfold of principles of secularity where creative, alternative hermeneutics in traditions, religious or secular, are denied. Contrary to *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, the religious must be afforded not only freedom, but public freedom, to express, debate, and bring rationale that might otherwise be deemed inappropriate for political life. The state need not endorse these rationales to allow them to be spoken aloud. Indeed, for reasons to be rooted reasons, ones that are tied deeply to the core convictions of persons and communities, they should often be spoken, and debated, aloud. Should not, for example, the convicted Canadian Catholic believe *and argue* that Catholicism is the best rationale by which to arrive at the principles of equality and freedom intrinsic to secularism? This is Jacques Maritain's point when he says, "I am quite certain that my way of justifying belief in the rights of man and the ideal of liberty, equality and fraternity is the only way with a firm foundation in truth," and so he should be. This is not only a reasonable but an expected position for communities that genuinely enfold these principles. To expose and debate these rationale in public is not to suggest that the state should accept these rationale itself, but that the state does have a vested interest in the free public expression of those rationale, not only as endemic to the nature of equality and freedom, but also to the creative strengthening of the connection between the commitments of communities and persons and the principles of secularism.

⁴³ Meral, "International Religious Freedom Advocacy in the Field", 30.

The secular state, in short, has an interest in dialogical political theology. It has that interest as both the surest inoculant of one or another civil religious hegemony being installed in the background, and as the most effective means by which to encourage citizens to construct a dynamic overlapping consensus. Religious freedom must first and foremost offer protection to that free exercise of political theology, the articulation of the understandings and practices that political actors have about the meaning and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes legitimate political authority. Such rival articulations cannot take place within a context in which the state has monopolized the rationale for its values and operative modes, or at least it cannot take place safely. This is what makes religious freedom a fundamental freedom, not privileged and distinct from other human rights, but rather intrinsic to and coterminous with the human rights agenda. In cases like Afghanistan and Pakistan, this often means a special importance on advocating for dissenting, progressive Muslims. In the words of Meral, “only Muslims can reform their own religious traditions,” and the Institute for Global Engagement’s President, Chris Seiple says, “Only good theology beats bad theology.”⁴⁴

Third, it should be understood that the **key strategies of laïcité and Judeo-Christian secularism as they relate to political legitimacy must be abandoned in religious freedom policy**; specifically, the repression of religious rationale, including non-Judeo-Christian rationale, in the public, and its commensurate polarization of the religious and the secular. Such exclusion is an obvious contradiction of principled secularism, which insists that there is no intellectually defensible reason for states to separate religious reasons from secular ones. While their rationale may be different, these can nonetheless participate together in articulating rooted reasons for secular principles. So the repression of the religious, defined as the inverse of the secular, is actually the privileging of one form of rationale over and against another. It bends toward exclusivist civil religion, not neutrality, and risks making religious persons and communities second class citizens.

Daniel Philpott, Monica Toft, and Timothy Shah make a good point about this in their argument in *God’s Century*. After longer empirical arguments about the nature and tendencies of political religion in global politics, they summarize their findings with ten rules

⁴⁴ Chris Seiple, “Say no to 'Jihadis,' 'Islamic terrorism' and 'Islamofascism,’” in *The Washington Post*, July 13, 2010.

http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/chris_seiple/2010/07/say_no_to_jihadis_islamic_terrorism_and_islamofascism_1.html. Accessed March 21, 2013.

for surviving “God’s century.” At least two of them echo the sentiments of principled secularism.

Their sixth rule: “accept that the more governments try to repress or exclude religion from public life, the more such efforts will be self-defeating.”⁴⁵ In their rule, they cite the report of the 2009 Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life in December 2009. The Pew Forum Report found that about 70% of the world’s people live in states with severe restrictions in religion, and yet it is those societies – China, India, Vietnam – that have high and growing levels of religious activism.⁴⁶ They write, “The more governments try to repress or exclude religious actors from public life in one generation, the more they inadvertently strengthen their capacity to influence public life in the next generation.”⁴⁷ As examples, they cite the Shah of Iran, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the repression of Catholics in communist Poland, the repression of Christian churches in apartheid South Africa, the repression of Hindu-nationalists by Indira Gandhi in India, the repression of Tibetan Buddhism in communist China, and more.⁴⁸ What they describe by contrast as successful strategies of the “cooption” of religious communities, may also be simply described as an exercise in what Philpott calls elsewhere mutual resonance, negotiating a principled, overlapping consensus between otherwise rival definitions of the religious and the secular.

Their ninth rule is also related: “accept that if governments fail to respect the institutional independence of religious actors, especially through systematic repression, the more these governments will encourage pathological forms of religious politics, including religion-based terrorism and religion-related civil wars.”⁴⁹ There is still a gamble inherent in trusting that religious communities will sustain political-theological perspectives that will overlap with a secular consensus, but the reverse strategy is even more clearly problematic: the more states interfere with and impose definitions of the religious, and monopolize public rationale, overtop their citizens, the more pathologically political theologies will develop.⁵⁰

The case of Bhatti, and the research of Toft, Philpott, and Shah show more than the theoretical deficiencies in *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, they show the practical advantage of principled secularism. In Pakistan, there is little political hope for expunging the

⁴⁵ Toft, Philpott, and Shah, *God’s Century*, 214.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 214.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 215.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 215.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 220.

⁵⁰ See, for example, chapters five and six in *God’s Century*: “The ‘Global’ Dimensions of Religious Terrorism”, 121-146; and “Religious Civil Wars: Nasty, Brutish, and Long”, 147-173.

religious, Islam, from public and political debate, as *laïcité* would counsel. There is equally little hope of transplanting Judeo-Christian sentiments. What does stand as a practical alternative is advocating principled secularism, absent the need to exclude the religious from the political process. No real, lasting progress in religious freedom can be made without an appeal to Islam. State-to-state advocacy between political elites is important, but when political elites are themselves often acting on the perceived necessity, and danger, of their own public, monopolistic state solutions will not be enough. Ministers, like Shahbaz Bhatti, who stood against these pressures found themselves censured not by the state, but killed by extremists hiding within the political culture. Lobbying secular principles will only succeed in short term legal reversals, if those principles are not themselves eventually extended and enfolded by indigenous political-theological communities.

Fourth, Canada's **religious freedom advocacy should therefore especially prioritize the protection of minority religious dissenters within a majority religious culture, sharply criticizing blasphemy and apostasy laws which make political-theological innovation impossible.** This does not mean, for example, that the protection of Christians in Pakistan is incidental to religious freedom advocacy, but it does mean that it may not be as decisively important as the protection of progressive Muslims if the goal is the articulation of a principled secularism in that country that includes Canadian values and operative modes.

Principled secularism is predicated on an overlapping consensus that can only take place within the free expression and debate of the Maritain's "deeper reasons." No consensus can be found in the absence of the conditions of that expression, and this especially includes religious actors and communities in heavily religious states. Michael Hoyt puts it more simply from his time working in Iraq: "while not every problem in Iraq was religious, every enduring solution for Iraq must include a religious framework."⁵¹ He recalls,

In the aftermath of the February 2006 bombing of the Shi'a holy site, the Askariya Shrine in Samarra (the golden mosque bombing), teenagers chanted in the streets across Iraq, "We are the soldiers of the clerics. We await the orders of our preachers!" Grand Ayatollah AliSistani spoke for Shi'a leadership, "If [the Government of Iraq's] security institutions are unable to provide the necessary security, the faithful are able to do that by the will and blessings of God."⁵²

⁵¹ Michael A. Hoyt, "The religious initiative for national reconciliation in Iraq" in Chris Seiple, Dennis R. Hoover, Pauletta Otis (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security* (London: Routledge, 2013), 262.

⁵² Hoyt, 262.

That aftermath proved to be one of Hoyt's most challenging experiences in Iraq, but he offers this as his concluding sentiment: "Religious conviction is the counter to religious extremism."⁵³ He writes, "When religion is part of the problem it must also be part of the solution. The wholesale abandonment of religion doesn't diminish its influence, it exacerbates it. The line of effort that suspends religion in some self-imposed network of private constraint is following a cartoon."⁵⁴ The priority, then, is on an internal political-theological orientation within religious traditions, at least as it relates to sustaining principled secularism. Sheikh Dr. Al Alani, a Senior Iraqi Sunni cleric and leader in Islamic jurisprudence put it bluntly, "If the religious leaders do not play a part in this [political action], it will not be solved."⁵⁵ The same can justifiably be said of the meaning and practice of religious freedom.

Principled secularism alerts religious freedom advocates that the problems in countries like Pakistan are far more intractable than extremists that may be rooted out, or destroyed. The problem is what Marshall and Shea call the silence, a culture of intimidation and fear that prohibits Muslims and other communities from reformist practice and interpretation of the religious. They argue that western governments fall victim to this intimidation when they embrace hate-speech bans, which "serve as proxies for Muslim blasphemy laws."⁵⁶ It is political-theological debate exactly that must be protected as the highest priority, if principled secularism is to be enfolded into religious political cultures. Writes Marshall and Shea,

If Islam, and Islam alone, were to be protected by the state from critique, an illiberal interpretation of Islam would attain a de facto privileged status in the West. Conversely, should Christianity and other religions benefit from such state protection, fundamental individual freedoms would be essentially negated.⁵⁷

Their survey shows that in Muslim-majority countries and regions, restrictions on freedom of religion and expression, based on prohibitions of blasphemy, apostasy, and "insulting Islam," are pervasive, undermine freedom, and cause suffering to millions.⁵⁸ They write, "The practice of punishing blasphemy is an important weapon used by radicals in Islam's ongoing war of ideas."⁵⁹ In this context, it is the reformers and the dissidents, theologians, journalists, activists, and more that must be afforded the protections of official state based foreign

⁵³ Hoyt, 268.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 268.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 263.

⁵⁶ Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, *Silenced*, 307.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 308.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 308.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 309.

relations, like Canada's Office of Religious Freedom, to challenge entrenched Islamic perspectives on the source and meaning of political legitimacy. The Office cannot offer a new political theological campaign to backfill the content of that Islamic rationale. That is the work of the co-religious reformers. The Office can, and indeed must, sustain the rights of communities and individuals to advance rival definitions of the religious in public. Practically speaking, this means a new priority, demonstrated in the case of Shahbaz Bhatti, in targeting blasphemy and apostasy laws around the globe. Marshall and Shea write, "Just as the institution of slavery, which garnered Muslim and other consensus in the past, has been dropped, punishments for blasphemy and apostasy can also be revised."⁶⁰

It merits repeating, as Nasr Abu-Zayd argues, "Charges of apostasy and blasphemy are key weapons in the fundamentalists' arsenal, strategically employed to prevent reform of Muslim societies and instead confine the world's Muslim population to a bleak, colorless prison of sociocultural and political conformity."⁶¹ The suppression of Islamic political theology, say Marshall and Shea, will be felt not only in Muslim-majority states and regions but also in the West and across the world.⁶²

Strategically, it is precisely Islamic religious communities in societies like Pakistan that must do the hard work of articulating political-theological rationale for the support of principled secularism. It is those hermeneutic innovations, those rooted reasons, which provide the best chance for persons and communities to sustain an overlapping consensus. Not, as in *laïcité*, despite the religious, and not, as in Judeo-Christian secularism, despite Islam, but precisely *because* of the reasons rooted in the social imaginary of a place and time. That is why minority dissenters must be the highest priority for protection of an Office of Religious Freedom in Canada, but also why, perhaps frustratingly, there are real limits to what the Offices of secular states can and may accomplish on behalf of the secularist principles they hold so dear. The irony of a secularist regime deserving of that title is that it cannot legislate the rationale by which the principles of its existence are given meaning and support.

6.6 Conclusion

⁶⁰ Ibid, 326.

⁶¹ As quoted in Marshall and Shea, 330.

⁶² Ibid, 330-331.

This chapter connected the demands of political theology, the disclosure of the religious and the secular and its commensurate demands on political legitimacy, to a preferential definition of religious freedom as principled secularism. In Canadian foreign policy, principled secularism reflects the values of equality of regard, freedom of conscience, and two operative modes of the separation of church and state and the neutrality of the state toward religions. It differs sharply from the dominant received accounts of *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism by advancing an approach that deliberately engages rationale of both religious and the secular kinds in forming, and sustaining, an overlapping consensus. The secular no longer serves as the inverse of something called the religious. While practical limits remain in this account, especially the constitutive values of Canada's liberal democracy, its history and tradition, principled secularism advances an approach to religious freedom that depends for its long term success on non-state actors (especially religious contexts, religious ones), and a dialogical political theology working to enfold the principles of secularism in an indigenous fashion. It is for these reasons that the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti demonstrates the long term limits of state based diplomacy in religious freedom, but also the high priority for religious freedom in challenging apostasy and blasphemy laws, which prohibit the possibility of non-state actors to engage in the work of creative political theology. There can be no true secularism without accurate, and contestable, definitions of the religious, tests that both dominant rival versions of religious freedom fail.

The answer then to explaining the variation in how Canada understands and applies religious freedom is at least partly in the rival versions of the religious that underlie rival versions of religious freedom. But those versions are often obscured by both the practical approaches to religious freedom in Canada and dominant theoretical paradigms in international relations. A third option, political theology, underscores a preference for a principled secularist approach to religious freedom. It alleviates the often confusing rivalry of the two dominant approaches, and offers practical advice on how to approach and support religious freedom in dominantly religious societies.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

Knowledge is never purely the work of the intellect – Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*

Hope is not a political virtue; it is a theological virtue – Martin Wight¹

7.1 Argument and Structure of the Chapter

This thesis has argued that underlying rival versions of religious freedom in debates over the Canadian Office of Religious Freedom are rival versions of the religious and the secular, *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism. It has further been argued that these versions are part of a shift in how the religious and the secular are understood in what Taylor calls the modern social imaginary, producing a unique, if varied, series of social forms in the political west. These understandings also persist in mainstream international theory, sustaining a new approach called political theology. This approach, which studies the understandings and practices that political actors have about the meaning of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and what constitutes political legitimacy, suggests a preference for a third definition of religious freedom, principled secularism.

Principled secularism defines the secular as not the inverse of the religious, but as the proper response of the state to diversity. That propriety is determined in the Canadian context by two values, equality of regard and freedom of conscience, and two operative modes, separation of church and state and the neutrality of the state toward religion. While consistent with some of the social forms of the modern social imaginary, this approach discloses and sustains those forms, and at the same time departs from its underlying logic of the modern demarcations of the religious and the secular. It is not ultimately inclusive, but it does create a responsible politics that sustains not only secular principles themselves, but also the freedoms of persons and communities to publicly and openly debate why, on whatever rationale, these matter. Only in such disclosure can an overlapping consensus between what Philpott calls rooted reasons be possible.

This thesis does not suggest a cosmopolitan unity or agreement on fundamental reasons, but rather that the most one can hope for, as Alasdair MacIntyre writes, “is to render our

¹ Martin Wight, “Christian Commentary”, talk on the B.B.C. Home Service, 29 October 1948.

disagreements more constructive.”² A constructive disagreement, Jacques Maritain might agree, is not a bad framing for the debate that originally produced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The religious problem with religious freedom is that the disagreement over the Office has, so far, been unconstructive in large part because it is not clear what exactly is being disagreed over. Political theology clarifies that disagreement, the policy and the mainstream theoretical gaps that lead to it.

In this conclusion, three avenues of further research are proposed, which extend some of the initial work of the thesis. First, political theology itself as a sustained inquiry, which is only stated in the most basic terms here, is a field that is flourishing outside of international relations. The work of top political theologians, particular those like William Cavanaugh and Paul Khan, who have only recently begun to be used by international relations scholars, deserves much more extended and protracted treatment. Their striking and disturbing claims, that the nation-state is its own kind of sacred entity, with demands of life and death, that does not merely supplement other religious communities but is in active rivalry to *supplant* them, is a major criticism that deserves further study by international relations scholars. This thesis has argued that the demarcation of the religious and the secular, and the social forms of the Secular age, are indeed both political and theological arrangements. But the claim that those arrangements are exclusive of, or hostile to, certain forms of religious commitment is a very important one for scholars who are serious about the reception of liberal democracy, and the social forms of the nation-state, in other religious societies abroad. Is it, as Scott Thomas has suggested, that we are living amidst a “clash of rival apostasies”?

Second, the complaint made against mainstream international theory in this thesis deserves a more constructive answer, one that advocates a theoretical approach that can take the work of political theology into account. It was already suggested at several points that the early English School, and especially scholars called Christian Realists, or what Jodok Troy calls soft realists, may provide the best opportunity for this. Political theology, with its emphasis on the socialization of the religious and the secular, its relationship, and how this shapes political legitimacy, takes as read Schmitt’s claim that many significant secular concepts have a background in theological ones. Political theology extends Jacques Maritain’s argument, that the *why* of such concepts and claims is unlikely to yield agreement, but it is nonetheless decisively important for not only sustaining those concepts, but also for reaching their secular

² Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 8.

articulation in the first place. A return to such foundations not only puts this conversation in touch with those early thinkers, like Martin Wight, Reinhold Niebuhr, Herbert Butterfield, and others, it also takes a renewed look at how their thought might serve contemporary issues in international relations. It is, for example, Jodok Troy's argument that a classical English School approach, with its candid debates on foundations and political theology, can help render a better picture of the global resurgence of religion, and religion in international relations more generally. The work of political theology, taken seriously within a classical English School framework, gets back to the basics of answering Martin Wight's famous question, "Why is there no international theory?"

Third, and finally, from the work of political theology, and a renewed theoretical articulation of it in international relations, a priority not only for religious freedom in foreign policy but of religious literacy and engagement in foreign relations more generally becomes clear. This thesis has argued that a principled secular approach to religious freedom makes it not an isolated right, but an integrated approach that advocates for the simultaneous realization of rights across a broad spectrum. Equality of regard and freedom of conscience, together with the separation of church and state or the neutrality of the state toward religions, are fundamental to the rights agenda because they underline the freedoms of understandings and practices that touch on people and communities' most basic commitments as they relate to political legitimacy. This is not somehow rival to, or isolated from, other basic freedoms, like freedom of press, or freedom of association, and so forth, but it is intrinsic to and suggestive of them. Religious freedom is, therefore, not just for religious freedom advocates, but a fundamental approach that is necessary for a range of human rights work in states and communities where strong religion and weak states are the rule; in short, in much of the developing world. The Office of Religious Freedom in Canada can mark its success not just, therefore, by promoting principled secularism abroad, but by promoting religious literacy and engagement with the entire Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development. Religious freedom should move beyond rights, with its own Ambassador, and into the mainstream of Canadian foreign policy.

7.2 Political theology, a sustained inquiry

The work of political theology, expressed by people like Toft, Philpott, Shah, and this thesis, is work that is important not only for understanding religious actors, but political actors of all kinds. Political legitimacy rests on demarcations of the secular and the religious, and the perceived relationship between these. It is as important for the liberal democrat in Canada to come to terms with these meanings and relationships, as it is for the theocratic Wahhabi. Without an account of the religious and the secular and its commensurate political legitimacy, neither approach can be rendered entirely intelligible.

But this also raises a disturbing secondary concern, which while beyond the scope of this thesis, is still central to questions of religion, religious freedom, and international relations: Is it the case that the Westphalian construction of the nation-state itself sustains what Schmitt calls formerly theological concepts, and is therefore not only a rival political order, but also a rival religious one?

At least two authors have begun to explore this question in detail, and have found their way into conversation with international theorists: William T. Cavanaugh, a political theologian, and Paul Kahn, a legal-philosopher. Cavanaugh's recent books, *The Myth of Religious Violence* and *Migrations of the Holy*, and one earlier book, *Theopolitical Imagination*, all touch on this question.³ In that work he has engaged with international theorists, including Scott Thomas. Paul Kahn was recently featured on the Canadian CBC *Ideas* series, "The Myth of the Secular" in which he discussed his controversial book, *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*.⁴ His engagements with Schmitt, and his work on American and international law, yield parallel insights to Cavanaugh's own.

William Cavanaugh's arguments expand on the idea that the boundary between the secular and the religious has shifted in modernity, to argue that this shift was not just a renegotiation, but a fundamentally new sacred, political order. He likens the establishment of the nation-state and its Wars of Religion to a hostile takeover, saying that the evolution of the state has been a slow, often violent, migration of the holy. In *Theopolitical Imagination*, he writes,

³ William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination* (London: T&T Clark, 2002) – *The Myth of Religious Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) – *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

⁴ Paul W. Khan, *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

We are often fooled by the seeming solidity of the materials of politics, its armies and offices, into forgetting that these materials are marshaled by acts of the imagination. How does a provincial farm boy become persuaded that he must travel as a soldier to another part of the world and kill people he knows nothing about? He must be convinced of the reality of borders, and imagine himself deeply, mystically, united to a wider national community that stops abruptly at those borders.⁵

Cavanaugh's point is one with which scholars of nationalism, following Benedict Anderson, are familiar. But he is arguing something more fundamental than simply that the nation-state has a hold on human imagination and what it values. He is saying that nation-states have a hold on fundamental, sacred values, ones so powerful that persons and communities will willingly sacrifice, kill, and die for them. This is political theorist David T. Koyzis's argument in *Political Visions & Illusions* where he identifies nationalism as one of the ideologies of modernity, and what he describes as "incurably religious."⁶ Koyzis makes a long argument that the nation-state, and especially its totalitarian manifestations, is profoundly inscribed with a religious narrative about genesis, deification, evil, and salvation.

So when Cavanaugh writes that the "transfer of power from the church to the state appears not so much as a solution to the wars in question, but as a *cause* of those wars," he is not only talking about a powerful polity, he is talking about a sacred politics, one whose powers of sacralization have been borrowed, and enlisted from an earlier Christian era. "The so-called wars of religion appear as wars fought by state-building elites for the purpose of consolidating their power over the church and other rivals."⁷ It was this transfer of power from the church to the state that was actually at the root cause of the wars.

The problem, argues Cavanaugh, is not that these definitions "condemn certain kinds of violence, but that it diverts moral scrutiny from other kinds of violence. Violence labelled religious is always reprehensible; violence labelled secular is often necessary and sometimes praiseworthy."⁸ He concludes,

Among those who identify themselves as Christians in the United States, there are very few who would be willing to kill in the name of the Christian God, whereas the willingness under certain circumstances, to kill and die for the nation in war is generally taken for granted. The religious-secular distinction thus helps to maintain the public and lethal loyalty of Christians to the nation-state, while avoiding direct

⁵ William Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination* (T&T Clark, London and New York, 2002), 1.

⁶ David T. Koyzis, *Political Visions & Illusions*, 27.

⁷ Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 162.

⁸ *Ibid*, 121.

confrontation with Christian beliefs about the supremacy of the Christian God over all other gods.⁹

Eric Hobsbawm argues that ours is an unliturgical age in most respects, with the striking exception of the public life of the citizen in the nation-state.¹⁰ Citizenship is tied to the kinds of rituals and symbols that are comprehensible in every way to the history of human society, with the one difference that ours claims to be neutral, secular, and rational. Cavanaugh argues that it should be no surprise that the transition into a secular state by nonmodern societies around the globe is anything but painless. The growth of secular Westphalian state-hood across the planet is, in his argument, a political-theological conversion project on a scale as never before witnessed.

Yet Cavanaugh is also singularly pessimistic about this new arrangement, essentially arguing that the sacred forms embedded in the nation-state have now become bankrupt. His theological criticisms come into focus in his later works, especially *Migrations of the Holy*, where he argues not only that the nation-state has installed these sacred, liturgical elements in its background, but that these elements are essentially destructive idolatries to which Christian people owe no allegiance. The nation-state, he says, has so stripped the earlier moral and theological content of the secularized Christian social forms it now inhabits, that being asked to kill and die for it is a bit like being asked to kill for the telephone company.¹¹ This coincides with the arguments of those like Oliver O'Donovan, that cut loose from its deep moral reasoning the state is nothing but abstract formalism, "a house swept and garnished waiting for seven worse devils."¹²

Cavanaugh's arguments may sound radical, but they have already received a serious reception by several noted scholars in international relations. Scott Thomas served as a reader and conversation partner for Cavanaugh's *Myth of Religious Violence*,¹³ Mariano Barbato, Chiara de Franco, and Brigitte le Normand cite Cavanaugh's argument at length as a foil in critiquing R. Scott Abbleby's argument in *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, and Cavanaugh himself served as appreciative critic of *God's Century*, in a series of published responses in

⁹ Ibid, 122.

¹⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 12.

¹¹ William T. Cavanaugh, "Killing for the Telephone Company: Why the Nation-State is Not the Keeper of the Common Good," in *Migrations of the Holy*, 7-45.

¹² O'Donovan, "Response to Jonathan Chaplin," in *A Royal Priesthood*, 313.

¹³ See Cavanaugh, "Acknowledgements", *The Myth of Religious Violence*.

Politics, Religion & Ideology.¹⁴ His strong political-theological criticisms provide an intelligible context within which charges of an “apostasy” of western order can be understood, and if only for that reason his work continues to receive modest attention in international relations.

Paul Kahn is also not an international theorist, but in his reading of Schmitt’s original *Political Theology* he attempts, as a legal and political scholar, to make sense of how contemporary secular theory suffers what he calls a “sacred gap.” Paul Kahn’s work is to yield an account of the sacred in secular moral order. He is particularly keen to understand acts of political violence as an expression of liberal political theory, not as the exception, but as an integral part of a sacred, sacrificial order of the state. He writes, “This is not hidden but celebrated in our ordinary political rhetoric: to serve and die for the nation is commonly referred to as the ultimate sacrifice.”¹⁵ The sovereign, he writes, “is no more imaginable from without than is a god to those outside of the faith.”¹⁶

Kahn’s project, like Cavanaugh’s, takes for granted some of the basic arguments in this thesis, namely “that the break between the secular and the theological is not what we might have thought,”¹⁷ but he goes further to say that “there is continuity, not discontinuity, between the theological and the political.”¹⁸ He clarifies,

The claim here is not that such a break [between the theological and the secular] should not have occurred and that politics must be put back on a religious foundation. . . . Political theology does not just challenge a particular configuration of legal institutions, as if the question were one of scaling down the wall of separation between church and state. It challenges the basic assumptions of our understandings of the meaning of modernity, the nature of individual identity, and the character of the relationship of the individual to the state. . . . Political theology must be . . . not the subordination of the political to religious doctrine and church authority, but recognition that the state creates and maintains its own sacred space and history.¹⁹

In this, Kahn is consistent with Cavanaugh: freeing the state from the church did not banish the sacred from the political, it merely reconfigured it. Seen against this backdrop it might indeed be said that Europe’s religious wars were religious, and that the sacred order of the secular state won; not the secular versus the religious, but two (or many) religious orders

¹⁴ William T. Cavanaugh, “God’s Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 13:3, 398-399.

¹⁵ Paul Kahn, 7.

¹⁶ Ibid, 12.

¹⁷ Ibid, 17.

¹⁸ Ibid, 18.

¹⁹ Ibid, 18.

pitted in violent confrontation. Writes Kahn, “It is an accident of history that the struggle of the state to free itself of the church was framed not as a conflict of faiths but as a conflict over the place of faith in the organization of political power.”²⁰

The counter-narrative of political theology is as unsettling as it is uncommon, but it has the major advantage of providing a theoretical account of sacred experiences in the nation-state. He writes,

Political theology argues that secularization, as the displacement of the sacred from the world of experience, never won, even though the church may have lost. The politics of the modern nation-state indeed rejected the church but simultaneously offered a new site of sacred experience.²¹

There are domestic as well as international aspects to this. Khan writes that political theology must “not only help us to understand ourselves but also to understand how and why our political imagination makes our [America’s] relationship to the rest of the world so exceptional.”²² It is a poor theory, he argues, “that fails to express a community’s experience of the sacred, even if it is good at explaining why theological speculation takes the form that it does.”²³ This is his indictment of dominantly liberal theory when it comes to explaining the state.

Khan’s work too, then, touches on experiences of the sacred and the religious in what he, after Schmitt, call their “secularized forms.” Where Khan is concerned to show the inability of liberal theory to actually explain the sacred depth and power of the nation-state, Cavanaugh is more concerned with showing that that power and depth are rival corruptions of the Christian gospel. But both are on the edge of doing political-theological work that takes seriously not only the shift in the religious and the secular in the modern period, but also what was lost, and what was gained, along the way. It is true that such a shift is political as well as theological. It deserves more attention, as Cavanaugh and Khan are beginning to give it, to compare that shift, and its derivative social forms, to other nonmodern social imaginaries. This thesis has argued that this shift has taken place and shown its significance for rival versions of religious freedom, but the argument of Cavanaugh and Khan is that this shift has also deliberately obscured the sacred power of the nation-state, a profound claim for those

²⁰ Ibid, 23.

²¹ Ibid 26.

²² Ibid, 10.

²³ Ibid, 119.

abroad who claim to resist western order, and western systems, on theological basis. A political theological approach defined as the understandings and practices that political actors have about the meanings of and relationship between the religious and the secular, and how these constitute political legitimacy, does indeed underline the urgency of this kind of study, and legitimizes, at minimum, its field of inquiry.

7.3 International theory, political theology, and the global resurgence of religion

This thesis has argued that mainstream theory often gets the religious and the secular, and its rival versions, wrong because it is itself predicated on a specific formation of the secular and the religious, derivative of what Taylor calls the modern social imaginary. Its social forms presume certain kinds of demarcations, which not only obscure internal rivalries, such as those between *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism, but also those nonmodern social imaginaries in which the religious and the secular may be constituted differently. In arguing for a political theological approach, this thesis did not itself suggest a school of international theory which could incorporate the approach, and so speak to a more comprehensive international theory that takes the religious and the secular seriously on its own terms, its meanings, relationship, and commensurate political legitimacy. Articulating such an approach, even if a series of correctives to mainstream approaches, is essential for international theory in an increasingly desecularizing globe. Martin Wight's classic question could justifiably be asked at the conclusion of this argument too: "Why is there no international theory?"

A consistent theoretical approach to international relations that takes the work and study of political theology seriously is central to international relations, if peripheral to this thesis on the practical puzzle of religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy. Most mainstream approaches, clearly, do not seem able or willing to engage with a political-theological approach that would unsettle, or at least contextualize, some of their most basic assumptions, like the objectivist economy, the pre-political public, and an ever-increasing self-government. Yet scholars like Jodok Troy, Scott Thomas, Charles Jones, and others find a sympathetic approach in the early, classical English School. Troy argues that the early English School, with its effort to *understand* the religious, rather than simply *explain* it as a variable that

produces political outcomes, offers a promising place to begin.²⁴ This, at least, is consistent with a political-theological analysis, with its emphasis that *how* religion matters, will very much change from place to place, and time to time, depending on how the religious (and the secular) are defined, interrelate, and what assumptions this sustains about political legitimacy.

Troy argues that the advantage of the classical English School is both its emphasis on (international and world) *society*, which makes it prone to understand religion, and the attendant stress it puts on the most basic images of global order. Recalling Kenneth Waltz's "three images of international relations" – man, the state, and war – Troy says that Waltz and many of his successors have focused on the last of the three. Those so-called neo-classical Realists like Fareed Zakaria still tend to reduce international relations to the second image (the state).²⁵

His argument is that to properly approach the subject of religion in international relations, first things must again be put into focus, namely humans, their world and life views, and the fundamental understandings and practices that make things like the state, and therefore the international system, possible.²⁶ It is not possible, he says, to study either politics or religion by relying only on the second and third images.²⁷ This too resonates with a political theological approach, and Taylor's arguments in *A Secular Age*. The state itself is enabled by certain practices and understandings, fore among them meanings of the religious and the secular, which must be disclosed to get not only a picture of the religious, but importantly a picture of *why* some things are called religious, and others secular.

What Wight calls the "intellectual and moral poverty" of international theory is, in his opinion, the result of two things: "first, the intellectual prejudice imposed by the sovereign state, and secondly, the belief in progress."²⁸ Wight writes, "The tension between international theory and diplomatic practice can be traced to the heart of international theory itself. It may be seen in the identification of international politics with the precontractual state of nature by the classic international lawyers."²⁹ An international theory that never goes beyond the second and third image cannot do, or admit to, the work of political theology, nor render a complete picture of the west's own accounts of the religious and the secular. It will,

²⁴ Jodok Troy, 7.

²⁵ Troy, 8.

²⁶ Troy, 9.

²⁷ Troy, 10.

²⁸ Martin Wight, "Why is there no international theory?," *Diplomatic Investigations*, 20.

²⁹ Martin Wight, 31.

in short, not be able to come to terms with rival versions of the religious and the secular. We do not understand the religious, as Robert Wuthnow puts it, “because our theories provide no basis from which to understand. They expect rationality and produce cynical interpretations based on assumptions about self-interest. They stress cause and effect, but leave no room for meaning and significance.”³⁰

These are the questions, according to Scott Thomas, that the early English School was engaged with. This school, a group of scholars including historians, philosophers, theologians, and former diplomatic practitioners, gathered together in the late 1950s to form the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics.³¹ Their goal was to investigate fundamental questions of international theory. Wight’s own contribution, says Thomas, was the historical sociology of different states-systems showing the importance of world history for the study of international relations. It was his historical sociology that led to the seriousness with which he took religion. Like Christopher Dawson and Herbert Butterfield, contemporary historians and philosophers of history, he agreed that religion was a “fundamental – not derivative – category to the understanding of culture, society, and civilization.”³² Writes Thomas,

It was at the level of “soil and society” that religion “works,” and religion was most powerful where it was least recorded and most difficult to observe, among the masses and in the practices and traditions of ordinary people. Because Wight took religious ideas seriously, and not as a derivative factor of other social factors, he was concerned about, and explicitly studied more directly, the role of religious doctrines on ideas about war and peace, the impact of religious doctrine on national churches and national consciousness, the evolution of diplomatic practices in the states-systems of different civilizations, and the role of a common culture in different state-systems in history.³³

Thus, concludes Thomas, if the religious is a fundamental category, as Wight thought it was, then one cannot simply get behind it for social and economic factors, and those who do reproduce the secularity intrinsic to much of modernity: mainly, that the religious as an

³⁰ Robert Wuthnow, “Understanding religion and politics,” *Daedalus* 120, no. 3 (Summer 1991), 11.

³¹ Scott Thomas, “Faith, History and Martin Wight: The Role of Religion in the Historical Sociology of the English School of International Relations,” 905.

³² Wight argues, “The historian’s fundamental beliefs about politics and man are necessarily implicit in his discussion of what he calls the historical facts, and these beliefs give colour and texture to his picture of history,” and “The best historical writing is that which is impregnated with the deepest reflections of the culture within which it is written.” Martin Wight, “What makes a good historian?” *The Listener*, 17 February 1955, 283-284.

³³ Thomas, “Faith, History and Martin Wight,” 925.

essentially private and transcendent series of obligations may influence moral or political choices, but is usually derivative of, not fundamental to, the social, economic, and cultural forces of a place and time. That the religious is private and derivative, and therefore secondary, is unique to the modern social imaginary, and scholars who reproduce such meanings may unintentionally produce a materialist, anthropocentric, and reductionist international theory. Such theories will struggle to comprehend the power of rival meanings of the religious in a desecularized globe.

Could not some of these elements be paralleled also in constructivism? They certainly can, as Jodok Troy argues, suggesting that the constructivist methodology is often one method used by today's soft realists, like Thomas, Philpott, and others. But for various reasons he is pessimistic about constructivism as a theoretical approach, the assumptions as a full theory that it makes about all social reality being ultimately human derivative, which misses out on the normative aspects that the English School stresses.³⁴ The religious, for one, may become yet another manufactured social opiate of self-authorizing and sovereign persons, a picture of reality that may fit with late modern sensibilities, but is certainly out of step with pre-or nonmodern understandings and practices.

There is a great deal more to be done here in articulating a classical English School approach that takes seriously a political theological approach, and it may well be that other nonmainstream traditions of international theory can do the same. But a theoretical approach that takes the religious and the secular as significant not only on their own terms, but also in the way that their understanding and practice shapes political legitimacy, is important not only to religious freedom in foreign policy, but to an understanding of global politics generally, if Toft, Philpott, and Shah are to be believed that this may well be *God's Century*.

7.4 Religious Freedom beyond Rights, Taking Religion Mainstream in Foreign Policy

This thesis has also proposed a new way to think about religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy, a principled secularism that integrates religious freedom with a broader rights agenda, while deliberately enlisting communities of all kinds, including the religious, in the forming

³⁴ Troy, 96.

and sustaining that agenda. Dispensing with the exclusionary secularity of *laïcité* and Judeo-Christian secularism is clearly important for religious freedom advocacy, but on the other hand it is also likely critical for foreign policy more generally. The argument has been that no indigenous rights regime can be sustained apart from the active support of a renewed political-theological hermeneutic, which connects political legitimacy to the meanings and relationship between the religious and the secular. This is not merely work for human rights activists, but work that the foreign service generally must be doing in states defined by strong religion. In many ways, the most exciting and promising work that the Office of Religious Freedom can do is to not only promote religious freedom, but promote religious literacy and engagement in Canadian foreign affairs generally. How can religious freedom move beyond rights and into a sustained and serious expertise on religion in global affairs at the disposal of diplomacy, defense, and development (the “3-D’s”)? This is neither easy nor straightforward.³⁵

The American example here is instructive. The United States has made modest gains worth imitating in incorporating religion into its foreign policy process. Since June, 2011, the Foreign Service Institute has held three sessions of a four-day Religion and Foreign Policy course, an expansion from a prior three-day course. The course has now graduated almost 100 Foreign Service, civil service, and locally employed staff. Religious freedom and religious engagement have been integrated into the Promoting Human Rights, Democracy, and Labor course. The Department of State hosted a senior interagency policy seminar on religious engagement in March, 2011, launched a seminar series on religion and foreign policy in October of 2012, and regularly incorporates religious freedom and human rights promotion into training in area studies for new Foreign Service Officers and Ambassadors.³⁶

The incorporation of such a list of training opportunities for the Canadian Foreign Service, or its diplomatic and defense staff, would be an extraordinary gain. However, Canada lacks America’s more comfortable civil-religious culture, making religious freedom and religious literacy in diplomacy a far harder sell. In this, America has had a distinct advantage over the

³⁵ Sections of this argument were published in Robert Joustra, “Religious Freedom Beyond Rights: Retrospective Lessons for Canada from America’s Office of Religious Freedom,” *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Spring 2013,) 87-89.

³⁶ For more detail on the American retrospective, see Thomas F. Farr and Dennis R. Hoover, *The Future of U.S. International Religious Freedom Policy: Recommendations for the Obama Administration* (Washington: The Center of Faith & International Affairs and the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, & World Affairs, 2009) and the special issue of *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* in Spring 2013, “Religious Freedom in the Study and Practice of US Foreign Policy.”

more secular political cultures of the north Atlantic, like Canada, England, and France. America's frank political-theological language, while deeply unnerving outside America and bordering on civil religion within, nonetheless gives it the tools to get "deep into religion's guts," as Thomas Farr has said.³⁷

The comparative advantage in Canada is therefore the reverse. Absent a strong Judeo-Christian civil religious establishment, Canadian models and advocacy of religious freedom can be promoted, not coloured by the so-far American-led movement on religious freedom. Indeed, such critics as exist of religious freedom coming to Canada, including *The Globe and Mail's* Doug Saunders and noted international theorist Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, are critical on fears of religious freedom becoming an "American style" repressive or "hegemonic" discourse. And while the conflation of American and Canadian political-religious discourse is a major mistake, the structure of this resistance is instructive. Laïcité is alive and well in Canada, and so then is its often reactionary response to anything appearing as American civil religion.

So if the American religious freedom agenda was assailed as missiological, evangelical, or an unnatural comingling of church and state, the new Canadian Office has been only more so. The Canadian Office emerges in a context that ironically has no constitutional separation of church and state, but nonetheless has a very powerful cultural secularism, not least in its political and media elites. Moreover, if religion in general is a phobia for many Canadians, *American* religion is especially terrifying. The construction of the Canadian Office around an Ambassador, like the American Office, and the wide-scale consultation of "religious people" have been significant public relations stumbling blocks that could trip up the Office before it even gets off the ground. While learning from the American Office, the Canadian Office must also be very serious about distinguishing itself from American-style diplomacy and religion. The same will be true in many other states around the world.

Yet in that distinguishing, it should also find ways to make the issue of political theology, and religious literacy generally, one which merits serious attention in foreign affairs. Lessons from the American context suggest that the new Office will need to be slow and strategic as it works to build religious literacy training. Much will depend on relationship building between the new Office and the departments of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development, and with

³⁷ Thomas Farr, *World of Faith and Freedom: Why International Religious Liberty is Vital to American National Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 44.

the bureaucratic experts already in place. Their existing sources of expertise must not be lost or marginalized, but they can and should be supplemented.

The initial modest \$5 million endowment of the Office will temper some of that ambition. But the new Canadian Office also needn't completely replicate the efforts or experiences of the American Office. International data on religious freedom is now available in a way in which it wasn't when the American office came online in 1998, so Canada and likeminded states can focus their attention more distinctively, as to illustrate Canada's independent agenda. That flexibility should inspire the Canadian Office to spend more time listening and learning to the particularities of the Canadian system, promoting religious freedom where possible, and serving at the disposal of already ongoing projects. The surest way for the Canadian Office to be lost in political obscurity is to quickly align with the American Office, making it yet another privileged project to be disbanded whenever the current government loses power.

The most important retrospective lesson the American Office can pass on is how important—and difficult—sustained, long-term relationship building with Foreign Service, development, and defense staff is for the integration of religion into the foreign policy framework. If Canada is to avoid a lost decade, like the Americans, of troubleshooting religious freedom policy, its Office and Ambassador Bennett will need to slowly build the confidence of the bureaucracy in the Pearson Building,³⁸ find strategic partnerships on ongoing projects with which to supplement religious literacy and training, and principally allay concerns of laicist and Judeo-Christian advocates alike that such training and integration with foreign affairs is essential to practical policy making in twenty-first century Canadian foreign policy. This is work not only for the Office, but also for academics and policy makers who take religious freedom and political theology seriously. A great deal remains to be done on the issue of integrating political theology and principled secularism with Canadian foreign policy more generally, not just religious freedom advocacy, which this thesis has only begun to articulate and propose.

³⁸ The Lester B. Pearson Building is the headquarters of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development. It is located at 125 Sussex Drive in the Lower Town neighbourhood of Ottawa, Ontario and was built between 1968-1973. Lester Pearson B. Pearson was one of Canada's most celebrated Prime Ministers, earning the Nobel Peace Prize for his work as Minister of External Affairs in the Suez Canal Crisis (1956). He later served in his own right as Prime Minister (April 1963-April 1968).

7.5 Conclusion

The case of the Office of Religious Freedom in Canadian foreign policy clarifies the religious problem, namely rival versions of the religious and the secular, but it also points beyond only religious freedom advocacy and policy toward a much broader and more general agenda on religion and international relations. In this respect, this thesis has proposed a specific approach to religious freedom, namely principled secularism, as a clarifying approach to this problem, but it has also suggested that several avenues of further research remain to be developed based on its arguments. The political theological claims of those like William Cavanaugh, Paul Kahn, and the international theorists who study them, are extremely controversial for those who believe the systems and structures of liberal democracy can and will be exported to a world lying in wait of self-realization and governance. The idea that, for example, the objectified economy, the pre-political public, and the self-governing person is not only derivative of certain shifts in the meaning and relationship between the religious and the secular, but also that the modern social imaginary is itself a profound, and rival, political-theological order is a major intervention that deserves closer attention. This thesis was not the place for that attention, but those like Scott Thomas, Jodok Troy, and Mariano Barbato are already creating and defining this space.

The further work of building on a theoretical tradition, like the classical English School, which takes the claims of political theology seriously is also an enormous, and potentially fruitful, area of research which may bring “the religious problem” into sharper focus for the discipline of international relations itself. Those like Jodok Troy and Charles Jones, who believe that a reengagement with this early tradition may revitalize international theory on its basic questions, on the first-image as Waltz puts it, may be on the cusp of recovering, from *within* the discipline, understandings of the global resurgence of religion that are urgently needed. The classical English School, those like Wight, Carr, Butterfield and others, with their frank engagements with international history, theology, philosophy, and more may also serve as lost models for the new push toward interdisciplinary studies. In this way, the religious problem brings into focus why international theory needs political theology.

Finally, the policy problem of religious freedom is indicative of more than simply rival versions of the religious and the secular in religious freedom but also in foreign affairs generally. Religious freedom is a natural and strategic point to engage this conversation on

the meaning and relationship between the religious and the secular and how it relates to political legitimacy, but the argument of this thesis suggests that those meanings – the work of political theology – is probably not restricted to only religious freedom as human rights advocacy. There is a public policy project that also emerges from this thesis, asking how, and in what ways, political theology and principled secularism can practically clarify and improve not only religious freedom in Canada, but the range of foreign policy. How and why the religious and the secular relate to political legitimacy matters not only for rights enforcement, but also for diplomacy, economic and trade agreements, and development work. The religious problem, in short, is not contained to religious freedom in Canadian foreign policy, even if that has been the focus of this thesis. New approaches, like political theology in international theory, and principled secularism in foreign policy, can and should become a part of the diplomatic toolbox of developed states like Canada. Then, as Alasdair MacIntyre says, we may not finally agree, but we may at least render our disagreements more constructive.

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